ANGLO-IRISH ESSAYS

JOHN EGLINTON

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The distinguished essayist, Mr. John Eglinton, whose subtle and delicate prose has been the admiration of a limited but discriminating public for many years, has made a selection from his more recent essays, to which some have been added expressly for this volume. In these "Anglo-Irish Essays" the reader will find at last an adequate collection of the work of one who has secured the praise of the late Professor Dowden, of George Moore, W. B. Yeats, "Æ," and a host of others no less qualified to speak with the authority of cultivated taste.

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Anglo-Irish Essays

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By

JOHN EGLINTON

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PREFACE

THE essays here reprinted, at the suggestion of some friends, have been taken chiefly from various defunct Irish magazines and newspapers and from a booklet of which the remaining copies contributed their little flame to the conflagrations in Dublin during the Easter week of 1916.* The title refers as much to the writer's point of view as to the subject-matter, and by it he would suggest that the Anglo-Irishman has been left a good deal out of account in recent years, any return to his point of view, or indeed any mention of him, seeming to strike a dissonant note in the melodious concord of the Irish Literary Renascence. Perhaps, however, "Irish Ireland," deceived by that acquiescent habit of mind which has characterized the Anglo-Irishman since the Union, needs to be reminded that he is still there. As he existed in the days of Protestant Ascendancy he has no doubt vanished. More than a hundred years, in which he has assisted at the progress of democratic ideals in Ireland, have taught him tolerance, have infected his Protestant eudaemonism with a melancholy scepticism, have mitigated his unsuspecting selfishness and caused him many misgivings as he conned the records of his past, and have bound him by new and inextricable ties to the ancient population of this island—in a word, have improved him out of all

* Thanks are due to *The New Statesman* for leave to reprint from it one or two contributions.

recognition as the descendant of the old rollicking Irishman of the eighteenth century. A less invidious name for the Anglo-Irishman would now perhaps be the Modern Irishman, the Irishman, namely, who accepts as a good European the connection with Great Britain and yet feels himself to be far more distinct from the Anglo-Saxon than he is from the Mere Irishman.

It has always been the instinctive policy of English government to ignore the existence of this race, which it snubbed and over-ruled all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and at which, far more than at the Catholic Irish, it aimed the Act of Union. During the nineteenth century this race almost disappears from history: its sons are over all the world and those who remain at home are silent, the objects of misunderstanding and abuse. Yet never for a moment does the Modern Irishman, while he looks on with detachment at the sectarian animosities of Limerick and Belfast, laughs at the Language Movement (to which he generally subscribes), and endeavours to enter into the romantic ideals of the Sinn Feiners, cease to feel it to be a matter of self-gratulation that he is an Irishman. We first notice the inconsistency in Dean Swift, who is usually represented (like the Duke of Wellington) as having been ashamed of his country, but who when in England was probably fully sensible of the privilege of spiritual emancipation conferred on him by his Anglo-Irish nationality. This is a point on which we feel ourselves, frankly, to be the superiors of all the world. We have next to no intellectual prepossessions. This open-mindedness makes us ideal cosmopolitans, and

enables us beyond other races to live by our wits in London and elsewhere. It serves us well in the posts which we accept all over the British Empire, and adds a useful and truly imperial tinge to the character of British rule throughout the colonies and dependencies. Akin to this open-mindedness is the generosity with which we have made a present to English literature of our considerable achievements therein, never having thought it worth while to keep a separate account of our share in it; just as we have made a present to the Mere Irish of the stand which we made for our liberties in the eighteenth century. We have, moreover, augmented the potentialities of our intellectual life by never pressing to a conclusion the Protestant and Roman Catholic controversy, the Protestant and the Catholic each holding in a perfectly friendly way that the intellectual position of the other is impossible; and we live amicably together, those of us who are Catholics being as little capable of starting an Inquisition as our Protestants of starting a Salvation Army.

Undoubtedly, if our race were to rouse and realise itself as a new and freshly compounded race the whole situation in Ireland would be transformed. Intellectual and political life would find their true centre, and a great many things and persons now appearing at the centre of Irish life would find their proper place at its outskirts. To this race destiny entrusted the task of unifying and governing Ireland as clearly as to the Anglo-Norman race it committed the task of unifying and governing England; and towards the end of the eighteenth century we seemed in a fair way to fulfil our trust. But when the premature introduction of

democratic ideas into Ireland at the time of the French Revolution led to a completely artificial political situation, in which the country's natural rulers had to look on while England made what bargain she could with the subject race, the Modern Irishman lost interest to a great extent in his own country. That almost culpable freedom from sentimental prepossession which has been noted as one of our chief characteristics is strikingly apparent in the fact that while the Mere Irishman still cherishes passionately the names of such shadowy persons as Brian Boroimhe, the Modern Irishman has almost forgotten the achievements of his great-grandfathers in the eighteenth century, of which Froude's History contains so perverse a travesty. If we can imagine the government of the United States of America, after the achievement of independence, conniving under the threat of invasion and insurrection at the restoration of the old colonial government, and leaving the tradition of Washington and Alexander Hamilton in the air, we shall have an image on an extended scale of what happened to the Modern Irish when, after the Union, the memory of Grattan and the Volunteers had become a dream. Their political genius surely did not exhaust itself in the wonderful group of orators in Grattan's Parliament, and if they could have been left to themselves instead of being bribed to accept the Union would surely have been equal to the strange situation in which they would have found themselves when the old Celtic nationality woke up into the democratic era. They would have made mistakes certainly, but in the end they would have convinced the Mere Irish that, at any rate, they

had to be lived with (as it is, the Sinn Fein doctrine of the Mere Irish hardly allows our right to exist), and there was always England to bring the whole population together in a sense of their common interest.

Frankly, one cannot feel surprised that England took alarm at this prospect. Possibly she chose the best way. It remains none the less true that a race before which was opening the most exhilarating prospects suddenly found itself deprived of its destiny in this country. If any doubt occurred to Pitt and Castlereagh that they would have a race on their hands with its occupation gone, they probably said to themselves that plenty of work would be found for this race in helping England to govern the colonies; and in fact, as already said, the political virtue of the Anglo-Irish and Scotch-Irish since the Union has gone into the management of the Empire. And if there had been enough posts to go round, we might have acquiesced in our disappearance from history. But in the nature of the case a good many of us had to remain at home, and it was hardly to be expected that we should rest content in an attitude of mere open-mindedness. Pitt, for instance, made one of the bitterest enemies English rule in Ireland has ever had by neglecting to answer an application for a colonial appointment from a young member of our race of the name of Wolfe Tone. Under these conditions we often, in fact, become bad citizens. We ourselves may be comfortable and satisfied as Castle officials, judges, sinecurists, etc., but our sons and daughters chafe at our provincial atmosphere, amaze us by their petulant outbreaks, and set up as rebels. This is the

phenomenon known from the earliest times of English rule in Ireland, and exemplified in numerous families throughout Ireland to-day, of the Anglo-Irish becoming "more Irish than the Irish themselves." Wherever there has been any ferment of revolutionary ideas, any threatening movement of hitherto inert because leaderless masses, it will usually be found that one of us has been mixing himself with action lest he should wither by despair. During the early part of the nineteenth century we looked on rather frigidly while O'Connell was persuading the Catholic peasantry that they were just as respectable as the Protestants, and was making them talk English and dress like squireens; but when in his old age he made a speech in which he said that no political liberty was worth a drop of human blood, it was more than our young men could stand, and they began about that time to take the Irish masses in hand themselves. The cold and self-conscious Parnell was far less an impersonation of the race-hatred of the Mere Irishman towards England than of the pent-up wrath of the Modern Irishman at not having a proper outlet in his own country for his character and talents.

In the recent Insurrection, on the other hand, it might seem that the passions and ideals of the Mere Irishman were alone engaged, but that is hardly true. For the ideals, at any rate, we must, I fear, accept the larger share of the responsibility, though our great quality of open-mindedness converted us into curious but disinterested spectators when these ideals were suddenly enacted in our midst. Our attitude throughout the disturbances must, in fact, have seemed a little ambiguous to anyone unacquainted with the inner

history of the Irish Literary Movement. For the past quarter of a century we have taken over from the Mere Irishman all his terms and traditions, and have been chanting the sorrows of Kathleen ni Houlahan in strains " more Irish " than anything in the ancient language of the country. Theoretically, this literature ought to be in that language, as we would, regretfully, be the first to admit; just as the Agnostics and Protestants who have chiefly produced this literature ought in theory to be pious Catholics. The pretence that the Modern Irishman is the Mere Irishman always imparted something of a Della Cruscan artificiality to the literary movement which ended in bloodshed in Easter Week. It would have far better become the Modern Irishman to remember that if Ireland is still unreconciled to the part which history and geography have assigned to it, the fault is mainly his : and that instead of adopting for literary purposes the religious and race antipathies of the Mere Irish, and stultifying his own past by accepting from them an obscurantist mythology of which the chief figure is some hobgoblin called England, it was for him to introduce new and unassailable ideals of nationality, to sink the wells of thought beneath the barren surface of tradition and to bring Ireland into political and spiritual unity.

Happily there is in Ireland something older than race distinctions, older than the Catholic Church, older than archæology, older even than the gods—Mother Nature herself, in whose presence the poet can forget the squalid animosities of race and creed. The future of Irish literature is mainly an affair between the poet and this kindly mother, as she manifests herself to the solitary thinker on the hills and plains of Ireland.

ANGLO-IRISH ESSAYS

THE ISLAND OF SAINTS

HAT "East is East and West is West"—in other words, that human nature in the East and human nature in the West are essentially different—is accepted usually as a sufficient account of the fact that what we call "universal" religions have as yet appeared only in the East. The mere statement of the fact has come to seem a kind of explanation of it. The real explanation more probably is conveyed in the saying of the Egyptian priest to Solon, in Plato's *Timaeus*: "O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children, and old man among you there is none." "How so?" asked Solon. "You are all young," said the priest, "in your souls; for you have in them no settled opinion confirmed through hearsay from of old, and no knowledge hoary with time." The infant nationalities of modern Europe were for many centuries the pupils of a religion which came to them with all the authority of that civilisation of which they were the heirs, and it was their part, not all at once to found a religion of their own, but to submit to authority, and to content themselves with such answers as were vouchsafed to their first questionings. The great religions, which have something in them to which a whole civilisation can look up, are the results of ages

of silent thought, and of the independent contributions of many schools. Give us a little time—at least a few centuries longer—and in the mouth of a new Buddha the conflicting tendencies of modern thought will blend in fresh oracles, as the lore of Babylon, Assyria, Persia, and Egypt were blended in Judaism, or as Judaism was blended with the Greek spirit in Christianity. The Christian Church, deputed by ancient Rome to instruct the nations of the West, made modern civilisation possible by the unity which she imposed among these barbarous young Titans. But with the first manifestations of the thinking faculty in these nations, Christianity, as at first accepted, at once began to be modified in all of them. True, these nationalities soon found themselves ranged against one another under the names "Protestant" and "Catholic," the Protestant nations openly avowing their impious new departure in religious matters, while the Catholic nations made a parade of loyalty to their old teacher. But though without doubt the Protestant nations found hemselves able, or obliged, to tolerate a freedom of thought considered disloyal in Catholic countries, we must not allow ourselves to think that these theologico-political terms represent any real division in that modern spirit which had awakened in Catholic and Protestant nations alike. As things have worked out, it has in fact come to be a matter of doubt whether the modern spirit gained so much by having in Protestant countries the self-complacency and worldly indifference of the average man professedly on its side. In France, for instance, which till our own age has been called a Catholic country, chiefly because it never chose to call

itself Protestant, or to modify the forms of its popular religion, the modern spirit has perhaps made things easier for itself than in any Protestant country. The terms have an historical and political, hardly an essentially religious meaning; and in all countries the real conflict is between intellectual hardihood and pious Epicureanism, between genius and indifference, knowledge and ignorance, initiative and irresolution. Perhaps fifty, almost certainly a hundred years hence, the terms Protestant and Catholic will be as obsolete as Whig and Tory are to-day. Except in Ireland, and one or two other countries where religion and politics insist on confusedly adopting one another's terms, the question of personal belief has generally come to be recognised as a very much deeper one than whether we are "Protestant" or "Catholic," "Christian" or "infidel." Our real beliefs belong to the subconscious part of our nature, and surprise, and perhaps horrify, ourselves as much as they could anyone else when they emerge occasionally.

Modern Ireland remains a "Catholic" country, more strictly than France or even Spain, chiefly, we must hold, because its religious consciousness in modern times has never really been awakened. We may even say that if Protestantism and Catholicism do indeed represent two essentially different religious tendencies, we are not yet able to say whether Ireland is naturally Protestant or Catholic, for the alternatives have never really been brought before it to choose between. There is even some reason to think that a country which produced Scotus Erigena and Virgil of Salzburg; a country to which Christianity first came in the form of the Pelagian heresy; a country in which

the national church at the height of the religious movement in the seventh century excited, by reason of its independent spirit, the keen hostility of the mother church at Rome, had a natural turn for what comfortable people call heresy, but what we prefer to call a disposition to take religious and intellectual questions seriously. The Celtic Church—a church, as Warren says, "having its own litany, its own translation of the Bible, its own mode of chanting, its own monastic rule, its own cycle for the calculation of Easter, and presenting both internal and external evidence of a complete autonomy"—was hardly, as has been pretended, an early form of Protestantism, but may at least be called a separate branch of the Apostolic Church; and the Epistles of Saint Patrick, if they have not a Lutheran flavour, have at least one distinctly Pauline. There came very near to being, as Ritchie says, another great branch of the Christian Church, beside the Greek and the Roman, namely the Celtic, which, had the fates proved propitious, would in all likelihood have been the first to produce its Luther, its Pascal or its Tolstoi, and so perhaps have had its turn in the spiritual hegemony of Christendom.

The true nature of that extraordinary period of religious exaltation through which Ireland passed between the fifth and the eighth centuries, and why it vanished without leaving any germ of development in the national character, will always remain something of a riddle. When we read of the solitaries who dwelt in the laurae of the Thebaid and of Palestine at the close of the antique ages, we are accustomed to think of them as fugitives from a corrupt civilisation.

But in Ireland, a country of primitive institutions and manners, of nature-worship, and without even a word to express the notion of sin, suddenly appears all that passion for seclusion, for mortification and abnegation, the flight from the world, the ingenuity in contriving romantic forms of penance, and even something of the delight of solitary communion with nature, which we generally think of in connection with social decadence or revolution. It is necessary to believe both that Irish life included great extremes of good and evil, and that there was a good deal in Druidism, or what the poets called the "old law of the men of Erin," which prepared them for Christianity. The old Celtic world, driven into narrow compass by the Roman empire, had seen its most sacred places desecrated with impunity, and was already filled with premonitory influences of Apostolic Christianity when the new faith made what we may call its state entry into the country with Patrick and his missionary band. The English had not yet landed at Thanet when the early missionaries, inconvenienced so far as one can learn mainly by some rough practical jokes of the old Druidic party, were freely wending their way about the country, distributing the Gospels and the books of the law. Some explanation of the prodigious success of the mission may doubtless be found in the character of Patrick, whom we have only to contrast with that dry ecclesiastic, Augustine of Canterbury, to see what the advantage was of having a religious genius at the head of an evangelical campaign. The author of the "Confession" (if not Patrick, then someone else of the same name)—"Saint Patrick," as he is styled, though not we believe officially—"Patrick, a sinner,"

as he preferred to call himself—was indeed the last of the apostles, the spiritual brother of St. Paul, though, as we shall see presently, with limitations which remained the limitations of Celtic Christianity. The bewilderment which he expresses at his own success ("I, a fool!") has all the naivété of a great man unconscious of the magnetic power of a genuine personality. But besides the advantage of Patrick's personality, Christianity seems to have been able to profit by an imbroglio arising out of the defection from Druidism, about a century and a half previously, of the great king Cormac, who is said finally to have been slain by the Druids for having renounced their teaching. The bards, we may believe, went mostly with their king, and there was a consequent division between bardism and Druidism which proved highly serviceable to Patrick. Even in our own day, when so many of our poets and novelists are agnostics, theosophists, etc., we know that they have done a good deal to undermine established religion, and in the time of Patrick it is clear that with the bards on his side half the battle was gained. We read that on his arrival at the court of Laeghaire, the chief poet of Erin rose up to do honour to him at his entrance. In fact when Ireland became, as it presently did, an "Island of Saints," it would seem that the latter were chiefly converted bards, in whose way of life it did not perhaps at first make so very much difference to become "saints." The notion of acquiring supernatural power by means of fasting and chastity, and by a solitary life, was quite congenial and familiar to Druidism, as were also the doctrines of the one God and of immortality. The sacred and remote places of

Druidism continued to be the sacred places of the monks, who had supplemented the old magic with the magic of baptism and the Psaltery. So close was the connection of Christianity with bardism that it seems to have been expected of a "saint" (and quite rightly) that he should also be "a bit of a poet"; and all their canticles bear witness, less to any real understanding of Christianity, than to an acknowledgment in it of a superior magic, as in the "Breastplates" of Patrick and of Columba:

"I adore not the voice of birds,
Nor a sneezing, nor a destiny, nor the earthly world,
Nor a son, nor chance, nor woman;
My Druid is Christ, the son of God,
Christ the son of Mary, the great Abbot,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."

Indeed, we have only to look anywhere into the Hymns or the Lives of the early saints to find support for our theory that these saints were chiefly bards cast loose from Druidism. That the bards were numerous enough to make themselves a public nuisance from time to time is well known; and the close association of the early Church with the bards appears in the account of the Convention of Drumketta, more than a century after Patrick, when the Church came to the rescue of the bardic order, threatened with extinction by the High King. The immense number of these saints excites our suspicion almost as much as the number of bards raises one's doubts as to the existence among them of any genuine poet. Any rogue who had submitted his head to the

tonsure, who fasted, and who could repeat the Psalter, was *ipso facto* a saint, just as the standing of a bard was determined by the number of tales he had by heart. Those devotees who made their abode on the top of the Skelligs or of Slieve Gullion; who got into coracles and drifted out to sea without oars or rudder, and sometimes threw away the loaves they had brought with them; or who tried in the name of Christ to float stones on the lake, were many of them, we may believe, the Quixotes of the old Druidic world, which indeed lingered on for many centuries after them. There is really nothing to choose between the morale of the bard and of the saint, as he appears in the legends, where he has parted with none of the privileges of magical power and authority. Columba himself has hardly more unction than Aitherne; and even his respected biographer Adamnan, we are told, retained a monk to tell his lies for him. The unregenerate character of the Irish saints struck Giraldus Cambrensis, who wrote one of his chapters under the heading, "That the saints of this country appear to have been of a vindictive temper." There is nothing to indicate, what must of course have been to some extent the case, that Christianity came to Erin as the satisfaction of any speculative or spiritual need; nothing to compare, for example, with the speech of the Northumbrian alderman at the council held to consider the mission of Paulinus. The Apostolic fervour and self-consciousness which Patrick brought with him from Gaul were a good deal lost on the volatile men of Erin, and indeed it is absurd to think of him as converting the Irish in any sense in which Wesley or D. L. Moody would have understood the

word. He came to exorcise demons, to baptize, to shave, not, as our patriotic poets and artists would have us believe, to conduct a series of evangelistic services. His impressive appearance and costume, the melodious moaning of his chanting clerics and bell-ringing on the silent plains, the magical clairvoyance which enabled him to see demons perched on the shoulders of kings, the impunity with which he violated the sacred rites of the Druids, his dangerous assiduity in prayer and fasting, and the formidable sincerity of his curses, all bespoke a superior power which confounded the magicians of ancient Erin, as Moses confounded those of Egypt. His writings express no elation at the realization of his youthful dreams, and it must be confessed no great pleasure in the society of his new converts, whom he would gladly have left but that the "voices" which he heard had told him that he must not again return to his friends. He had brought the ends of the earth within the fold of the Church, yet the world continued, and he ceased wearily to take account of the number of persons whom he baptized so indiscriminately. He had turned the bards into clerics, and in the Ireland which he left behind him—in which the solemn note of personal religion in the "Confession" was not taken up by any of his successors—it was bardism which took advantage of the use of the writing-tablets which he had brought with him. The literature which rose in this country out of the mission of Patrick —unlike those literatures which rose in England and Gaul out of the missions of Augustine and Martin of Tours—is the expression of that primitive paganism which Christianity came to cast out.

It is interesting to remember these things at a time when a kind of exreme unction is being administered to the expiring language of this country, as "piety's own Celtic tongue"; whereas in truth Christianity never learned to express itself in Irish. The "Island of Saints," or Celtic Ireland, is that country which throughout its whole history has never produced a saint, understanding by the word a religious genius. What strikes an outsider in first approaching the Irish language, with the patriotic intention of mastering it, is that it suffers from the same want from which the spirit of Irish nationality has suffered, namely, that it has never undergone a spiritual discipline: it still retains a rude flavour as of a language which has never properly been to school. It did not happen to the Irish language, as to the Anglo-Saxon, to lose and find itself, to go under bondage, to hew wood and draw water, and on a day to find itself stronger than its taskmaster and to enter into all his possessions. It is objected to the English language, on the other hand, that it is "saturated with Protestantism"—that "Teutonic development of Christianity" of which there has never been what seemed at first promised, a Celtic counterpart. The English language is saturated, at any rate, like all successful languages, with a spiritual quality, not derived exclusively or perhaps even chiefly from Anglo-Saxon sources, and certainly not from Protestantism, but from a long discipline and development through which it has come to be an element in which thought can breathe and minds live and produce after their kind. True, the history of the English language has given its thought a trend which perhaps may with a little unfairness be

styled, as Newman styled it, Protestant. But if the English language be saturated with Protestantism, with what is the Irish language saturated? Listen to the last mutterings of the "Grand Old Tongue," and you will hear it babbling of the fancies of its youth, in the days before Patrick. It was only with the introduction of the English language, and when Ireland began to be affected indirectly by the Reformation, that it became the pious nationality that we know.

1905.

A NEGLECTED MONUMENT OF IRISH PROSE

HE question, Why did Ireland reject the Bible? is closely connected with another question, Why did Ireland fail in literature? not so much that Ireland's final rejection of the Bible was the cause of its failure in literature, as that both of these things have come of a peculiarity of her spiritual history from the earliest times—the complete separation in it of things sacred and things profane. In all countries literature begins to be national with a claim made on behalf of the people to think for themselves. It was so in England in the age of Chaucer, Langland, and Wyclif. It was so in France a century earlier when Jean de Meung, in his continuation of the *Romance of the Rose*, initiated the people, not without a good deal of scandal, into a "philosophy wholly emancipated from theology." But literature in Ireland never took the great questions of life and destiny into its own hands. The people, in the person of any great reformer or poet, never claimed the right to think. No genius ever arose out of the gulf set between things sacred and things profane. The literatures of France and England grew up with the freedom of thought, and finally became the national organs for the expression of the mind of those nations; but Ireland, more and more in the course of its

history, has abandoned thought and speculation to a religious order holding itself aloof, or at any rate distinct, from the national life. Irish literature and Irish religion have maintained two distinct and partly hostile traditions; so that it has been the curious destiny of Ireland, not only to have been the "Island of Saints," one of the chief refuges of Christianity in the early Middle Ages, but to be the last home in Europe of what we call Paganism, the country where the kind of life portrayed in primitive literatures has lasted longest.

The great national book of the Hebrews seemed at one time likely enough to become in Ireland, what it has been in so many countries, the begetter of an original literature. Patrick and Finn Barr, it is told, went about the country distributing the Gospels and the Books of the Law. Ancient Irish literature, by the very form of its annals and many of its narratives, bears witness to the familiarity of those who wrote it down with the Hebrew Scriptures. Ireland, at the close of the seventh century, when Christianity lay brooding here in a sort of halcyon calm and a gentler temper fell upon its bards and heroes; that Ireland into which the poem of Prince Aldfrid of Northumbria gives us a glimpse, "Inisfail the Fair"—that inoffensive, pensive Ireland, where all things were going well, on which Fate, without a particle of provocation, suddenly let loose her yelling dogs of destruction, her Danes and Saxons—if it could only have continued! Those, indeed, were Ireland's palmy days, and let no ruthless historian destroy her belief in them. It was long afterwards, in the twelfth

century, after her first sorrows had come upon her, that Ireland, north and south, passed under the regular authority of the Church of Rome. This silent and gradual supplanting of the once glorious national Church of Erin, whatever this country may have gained through being thus brought within the community of European nations, was yet the symbol of an end which had come to much that was most promising in our earlier history. The bond of union between national and ecclesiastical life disappeared with the nationality of the Church. In literature it widened the breach between things sacred and profane. Popular literature fell wholly into the hands of the bardic order, an institution pertaining to the childhood of nations, and which Ireland, in the ordinary course of its development, was beginning to outgrow. For it was not only Edward III. in his Statute of Kilkenny (which, by the way, like the Anglo-Norman invasion, was supported by ecclesiastical authority), or Edmund Spenser, in his "View of the State of Ireland," who pronounced this standing army of poets to be the bane of the country in several respects; but soon after the curtain rises on the regular narrative of Irish history, we find the authorities of Erin assembled to consider the best method of dealing with what had become a public nuisance. As Keating says:—"The poets were a great burden and it was difficult to control them. For the Chief Poet's retinue numbered thirty, and there were fifteen in the retinue of the poet who came next to him; and about that time nearly a third of the men of Ireland belonged to the poetic order, and they quartered themselves from Samhain to Bealltaine on

the men of Ireland." * The Ard-Righ of that time, Aodh Mac Ainmire, wished to do away with this outrageous institution, but at the suggestion of Columcille, whose political influence was then great, their numbers were reduced, and many of them were turned into schoolmasters. King Aodh's proposal was so energetic and drastic that one would like to know more of an Irish statesman who seems to have been as free from sentimentalism as Edward I. And as it turned out, the settlement of Drum-Ketta was by no means the end of the abuses of the bardic order. Right down to the Penal times we hear of them chiefly as bullies, braggarts, and scamps, and we may be sure that whatever poetry the bardic class, as a class, produced, was as paltry as some of their "satires," etc., which have come down to us. Their very notion of a poet as the member of a kind of guild, or bardic order, precluded the emergence of a great poetic individuality much in the same sense and to the same extent as a too rigidly-established priestly order

*The following passage in Gosson's *School of Abuse*, written in the spacious times of great Elizabeth (1579), serves to show that other nations have been slow in disestablishing their bardism:—"We have infinite poets, and pipers, and suche peevishe cattel among us in Englande, that live by merrie begging, mainteyned by almes, and privily encroach upon everie man's purse. But if they that are in authoritie, and have the sworde in their handes to cut off abuses, shoulde call an accompt to see how many Chirons, Terpandri, and Homers are heere, they might cast the summe without pen or counters and sit downe with Racha, to weepe for her children, because they were not."

precludes the emergence of a new spiritual initiative. The true poet, as we now see, is depressed and silenced by the necessity to conform; and we may conjecture that many a poetic soul in Erin remained mute and inglorious, or what was worse, became loud and turgid, through having to accept the traditions of the bardic caste. The bards seem always to have been afraid of being too serious. Any consideration of the mysteries of existence, or any aim at inspiring men with high and consolatory thoughts, they left to the dull fellows who gave themselves up to the recital of psalms and prayers. They gave Ireland for its ideal the jolly fellow, subsequently incarnated in the heroes of Lever and Lover. The only virtues which they never wearied of praising, hospitality and generosity, were those by whose superstitious exercise they were themselves enabled to maintain their useless existence. Sin é an ṡeul maṙ ṡuaiṙ mire é, agus má tá bṙeug inṙ an ṡeul, bíod!

The existence in Ireland of two large communities of men, one religious, the other non-religious, and, to a certain extent, anti-religious, was impossible without a certain rivalry and hostility arising between them. The clerics learned more and more to scorn and hold aloof from the bards, whose idleness and abuse of privileges they justly censured, while the bards retaliated by contrasting the glories of an heroic age with the times in which they were fallen. It is surprising to some when they learn for the first time that a section of Gaelic literature which seems most ancient in its thought and spirit, those Ossianic ballads in which pagan life is so forcibly contrasted with the ascetic and devotional, should belong to more recent

centuries. The hardihood of Oisin in dialogue with Patrick surprises us to this day. In these poems the bards went so far as they dared with a people whose affections they held, while the Church retained the people's veneration. Meanwhile, between the bards and the priests, "the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed." When the Reformation came it was needed in Ireland, at least as much as elsewhere; less, indeed, on account of any great ecclesiastical abuses, than because of the sad lethargy into which the mind and spirit of the nation were fallen. Yet there seemed no way of reaching the national consciousness; no way, except one, and that was by translating the Bible into the Irish language.

Small blame to the people of Ireland that they did not accept the Reformation as it was offered to them—that they refused to regard the gentleman or lady on the throne of England as the Head of their Church in preference to the remote and mysterious Bishop of Rome. Yet as regards the welfare of the language it might have been better if they could have consented to do so. An early enthusiast for the Irish language was Queen Elizabeth, who seems to have advanced far enough in the study of it to encounter difficulties which indisposed her to add to her royal cares the considerable one of mastering the tongue. It is true this inclination of Queen Elizabeth for the Irish language was not altogether disinterested. Having been excommunicated by the Pope, one of the first acts of reprisal which had occurred to her was to convert the Irish language into an engine against the Papacy. She made a personal matter of it too, for it was her own money which paid for the fount of type

which was almost the beginning of Irish printed literature. In 1603, eight years before the English authorised version, the New Testament appeared in Irish, translated directly, with the aid of several learned Irishmen, from the Greek. There can be little question that if self-interests had not interfered, the Bible in Irish, applied to the mind of the Irish people at a critical moment, might have been a highly important influence in its political and spiritual history, and that the Irish language might have had the nucleus of a serious modern literature, the lack of which has caused it to be cast aside by successive generations of Irishmen as they have emerged into the air of the modern world. The experiment was defeated, perhaps chiefly by the Irish Government, who dreaded the publication of a book which they feared would create a soul in the nationality which they sought to destroy; and, secondly, by the Catholic priesthood, who now for the first time began to take an interest in "literature for the people," and who printed on the Continent (partly, as some say, from Elizabeth's type, which they had got hold of) the first of those books of pietism which have been a questionable substitute for the antique insight and compelling solemnity of the Bible. Soon after, the dreadful incidents of the Plantations and Rebellions fixed Protestant and Catholic in enmity toward one another, and the cause of Irish nationality came to be involved more and more hopelessly in *odium theologicum*. The printing of the Old Testament in 1685 was due mainly to the philosopher, Robert Boyle; as is well known, the translation had been begun under the care of the good Bishop Bedell, and it, too, is a more or less direct

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translation from the original. But the country, under the direction of its spiritual guides, would now have none of it, and its circulation was left to the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, which arose at the end of the century. There is something perhaps a little pathetic in the naíve assurance of those monarchs, philosophers, and bishops who interested themselves in the enterprise, that the Hebrew Bible, translated into the tongue of the Gael, would prove irresistible. Perhaps, after all, the solemn note of Hebrew literature was out of tune with the Gaelic temperament. Perhaps the only language in which Ireland could possibly have read the Bible was English. In any case, it is hardly on its literary merits or by authority of its spiritual wisdom, that a book recommends itself to the hearts of the people. Even in Wales, where there was not the same political or religious division between government and nationality as in this country, the translation of the Bible had for a long time very little effect in stopping the decay of the language; and the Bible of Bishop Lloyd would probably have had much the same destiny as Bishop Bedell's, had not the institution of Sunday schools by the Methodists obliged little boys and girls, no doubt very reluctantly, to study it and learn it by heart. Few Irishmen will admit that Ireland would have been made a more interesting and agreeable country by an evangelical movement which would have introduced Bedell's Bible into every cottage; but it was probably at the cost of her ancient language, as well as of some other things, that Ireland kept her religious tradition unbroken.

1905.

THE GRAND OLD TONGUE

STATELY and venerable personage, affectionately known among his admirers as Ar dTeanga Fein, or Our Own Tongue, has reappeared in our midst of late years after a long and nearly mortal illness, profiting by the increased amenity of Irish public life. Few, indeed, will deny that a grace and dignity are diffused by this ancient presence, whose noble aspect is not belied by the strong current of deep-sounding vocables which issue from his throat in discourse, and few can refuse themselves the pleasure of passing a word to him when they meet him, for the sake of experiencing the inimitable gusto and heartiness of his response, which has, indeed, the "very sound of courtesy." To us who are condemned to tread the pavements of a large and sophisticated town, his presence wafts an agreeable pungency of peat-smoke, the airs of boglands under the moon, the mists and eternal cadences of the Atlantic. Notwithstanding the homely burr in his accent, and a certain suggestion of a lack of book-learning and culture conveyed by his manner of slurring his syllables and running his words into one another, the general impression of dignity made during the slightest intercourse with him is such that no one dreams of raising concerning him the question, whether he is a gentleman. And, indeed, when we reflect that his ancestry can be traced as far back as

that of any of his compeers of Europe and Asia, the question would seem sufficiently superfluous. That he has seen better days is certain; there was even a time when not only this island but its larger neighbour, together with a large slice of the Continent, were his own; and if he no longer hears around him the language of courtiers, cultivated poets, and learned ecclesiastics, there are not wanting those who assert that in human dignity he loses nothing by comparison with that rival who has supplanted him, to whom he refers with majestic tolerance as Beurla. His caubeen may have knocked itself out of shape against the lintels of humble doorways, and his coat may be green about his shoulders, yet he never wears a cringing or shabby-genteel air.

There is, however, one baffling peculiarity about this venerable personage, inconsistent, it is to be feared, if not with his public notoriety, at least with his reinstatement in what many of his admirers claim for him as his birthright. With all his heartiness, for the sincerity of which the deep note of his voice is a sufficient guarantee, he does not permit that close intimacy for which he provokes the desire; and however numerous those may be who can boast a bowing acquaintance with him, it is comparatively rarely that one meets with any person who can be said by common consent to know him well.

As one of those anxious to acquire something more than the bowing acquaintance of which so many can now boast with the Teanga, the present writer has listened to his deep-chested utterance, endeavouring after him to fetch up his *g's* from the back of his throat and to smash his *r's* against his palate, in the

hope that finally the old man would dispense with his rôle of elocution-master and narrate with the zest born of perfect intimacy some of those inimitable tales with which his memory is stored, tales to which, it will be remembered, the great poet, Edmund Spenser, listened not without appreciation. But the barriers to the attainment of this perfect *rapport* seem insuperable. The Teanga would seem to have lost the flexibility of youth and to be the slave of old usages, which, however interesting in themselves, prevent his meeting his disciples half-way, as a master should do who has the secret of communicating his spirit. And, indeed, a knowledge of his history disposes one to accept him just as he is, and not to expect from him now a departure from his conservative instincts. While his European contemporaries have lived and grown to what they are amid the stress of epoch-making ideas and movements, have enjoyed ceaseless intercourse with one another, been partners in the same enterprises, and made common cause against the foes of intellectual and spiritual liberty, he fell, at the very dawn of what we call the modern movement, out of any share in the titanic struggle of the new ideas, and living out his life in solitude and far from towns, with all their iniquities and revolutions, indulged his dreamy inclinations, sharing the kindly life of simple peasants. And now, while his compeer of Germany is valued for his philosophical discourse, and that of France for his lucid critical insight, while Beurla, forgetting the golden dreams of youth, is concerned chiefly with practical questions of sociology and government arising out of a vast empire—*his* talk is of turf-cutting on the mountain-side, the kettle on

the hob, the green boreen, or twilight trysting-places. Has not this rugged but not ignoble kinsman of the Aryan family of languages still a part to bear among his lofty brethren?

> "The cloud of mortal destiny,
> Others will front it fearlessly,
> But who, like him, will put it by?"

The best friend of the Teanga could not wish for him a more beneficent mission than that of interpreting, by means of his songs and tales, the life and thought of human beings living in the bosom of elemental nature.

His presence with us, meanwhile, excites a special and pathetic interest, inasmuch as several learned doctors have pronounced that he cannot live much longer, and that the energy which he now displays is only a last exhibition of vitality, ere he sinks into the final coma which precedes the easy death of the old. His admirers, it is true, vociferously scout this verdict and predict a glorious future for the Teanga, full of all the inspirations and ardours of youth and fortune; nay, they assert that Beurla will have sunk into dishonour while a golden age is still opening out its vistas before the rival whom he sought to exterminate. It is very doubtful, however, whether those who indulge these fancies are the best friends of the old gentleman, whose infirmities and peculiarities are more suited to a life of retirement and rusticity. Those intellectually desperate men, who would hurry him into an impossible position as champion of political and religious parties, misconceive entirely the true nature of his mission, and, as might be expected, such persons are for the most part ignorant of the old man personally. It is, at all events, permissible to hope

that under the care of the good friends whom he has found in his decline, he may live on now without much losing ground for an indefinite number of years. Heartily let us pray that he may do so! For his presence sheds an old-world distinction over the whole island which was once his own, and to every hill and stream of which he bestowed in the morning of his youth a name.

1901.

"THE IRISH MYTHOLOGICAL CYCLE"*

F the Irish race had succeeded politically, the old wonder-world of myth and legend might have been lost from memory more completely than it has been. It is quite possible—nay, judging by all analogies it is almost certain—that the excitement of political success, and the new forms of life and energy, and it may be of belief, brought into existence by it, would have been more unfavourable to the preservation of ancient memories than were the Danish invasions or the Anglo-Norman conquest. The two nations of modern Europe which have had the most conspicuous destinies, England and France, are those which have most completely lost sight of primitive beliefs and have no longer the material from which to recreate them. England has to interrogate Iceland as to those early divinities after whom it still names the days of the week, and France is somewhat similarly indebted to Ireland. So far, then, as the preservation of the ancient traditions of the Irish Celt are concerned, it would perhaps be hard to decide whether the Danish and Anglo-Norman invasions did more damage by wantonly destroying documents than service by arresting the development of the nation on its own lines: for whatever turn an independent Irish

* *The Irish Mythological Cycle.* By M. d'Arbois de Jubainville Translated by Richard Irvine Best. Dublin: O'Donoghue and Co., 1903.

civilisation would have taken, we may feel pretty sure that it would have passed through periods in which primitive beliefs would have meant as little to it as did the "Lay of Beowulf" to England in the time of Bunyan, or the Breton romances to France in the time of Voltaire. History is the record of those transformations by which, in working out its destiny, a nation continually dies unto itself. Nations have not histories nor men destinies, if they cannot now and then sacrifice precedents to principles. And in fact Ireland has never been a wholly unprogressive country. For several centuries, indeed, no great European movement has influenced ostensibly the character of Irish nationality; but there was one such movement in which Ireland shared to the full as much as any European country, and that was the monastic movement of the Christian Church at the close of antiquity and the commencement of the Middle Ages. It was Christianity, so freely received in ancient Erin at a time when there was no external compulsion upon it to receive what it did not like, which divided Ireland for ever from its childhood.

What kind of beliefs were those displaced in Ireland by Christianity? For an answer to this inquiry, the ordinary Irish reader, until recent years, has had to rely on those unsatisfactory chapters with which Irish historians, since the eleventh century, have introduced the story of their race. This spurious Celto-Hebraic mythology comes down to us from a time when Ireland read the Bible with uncritical faith, and the bardic historiographers scanned the Hebrew records of the origin of the human race, assuredly with more excuse than our modern "Anglo-Israelites," but with

results far more perplexing to those who would now sift in these accounts the genuine from the fictitious. It was in the eleventh century, according to M. d'Arbois de Jubainville—the century in which the "Book of Invasions" was compiled—that a "school of mythology" arose, which set itself to adapt the floating traditions of the Celt to the unimpeachable authority of the Bible. The gods of the pagan Irish, who still roamed at large in the imagination of the people, were called in to give a last account of themselves to that race, in respect to which they had, perhaps, taken their duties somewhat lightly, and which had now adopted the essentially iconoclastic religion of righteousness. The Irish gods were more fortunate in the destiny meted out to them than were their august kindred, the gods of Greece, when, in the panic of which Milton has sung, they vacated their shrines on the advent of the Christian era. Instead of transforming their former gods into demons, the Irish mythographers, following an appropriate text in the sixth chapter of Genesis, agreed to regard them as "the mighty men which were of old, men of renown." And henceforth, in the ancient history of Ireland, it became hard to distinguish gods from men. The Tuatha De Danann and the Fomorians seem not less to take part in human fortunes than to direct them, and the squabbles of divinities break in on the honest wars of mankind. To distinguish the mythological element in these old tales, and re-fashion from them something like a system, was a task which awaited the modern science of comparative mythology; and though it is probably vain to expect anything more certain than suggestive speculation as the result of

such inquiries, M. d'Arbois, in the work now translated by Mr. R. I. Best, no doubt indicates once for all the most likely ways of getting at the truth. Mr. Best, indeed, deserves the thanks of the Irish reading public for having made generally accessible a work which helps so much toward setting our ancient history on a true foundation.

The ordinary reader will care less to hear from M. d'Arbois how comparative mythology "equates" Tethra with Kronos, or Ith with Prometheus, than to learn quite generally with what views of man and nature the great race of ancient Celts looked forth on the spectacle of life and destiny. What vital perception of truth was theirs, or what were their errors? First of all, the Celts appear to have been always a race of implicit believers. There is no trace of such "philosophic doubt" as appears in the ancient writings of the Hebrews, the Greeks, or the Anglo-Saxons. Where, as with the Hebrews, the belief in another life, for example, arises as an explanation of the injustices and imperfections of this, a fundamental doubt as to the whole matter is evident, and the reward of the righteous becomes an object of prayer and hope. That is a philosophic faith, or a truth conceived by inference. But what distinguished the Celt was the vision—for it was nothing less—of another world interpenetrating this, seen at times with the bodily eyes and even journeyed unto with the bodily feet. It might be said that such articles of belief as the repayment of debts after death, or that the dead warrior will use the weapons buried with him, are but the crudities of savage minds; but this belief in the present reality of another world has

remained with the Celts up to times when no one can say they were savages. Christianity did not come in Ireland as an answer to men's doubts about the soul or about immortality. "I would treat them as fools," says Valerius Maximus, in a passage quoted by M. d'Arbois, "if these wearers of breeches did not hold the same beliefs in the immortality of the soul as Pythagoras professed in his philosopher's mantle." And with various other writers of the Roman world Celtic beliefs are alluded to with more respect than are those of the Jews. Christianity in Ireland would hardly have found itself, in the 7th and 8th centuries, endowed with a missionary vocation, had the Celt not been originally prepared by temperament and habit of mind to accept it. Yet it was not as a rule of life, such as Christianity appears to us now pre-eminently to be, that it was so completely accepted in Ireland, but as an authentic account of that other world, in which the Celt never doubted. A religion, in the sense of an explanation of life, the Celts did not require, for they had that explanation already in a belief which was implicit with them. As another writer on Celtic subjects, M. Le Braz, says, "The future life, regarded as a sanction of the present life, was not, in truth, a Celtic conception."

It is reasonable to look for some kinship between the primitive beliefs of a people and the characteristics revealed in its literature and history when it has become one of those ministers of destiny called nations. Perhaps M. d'Arbois is not too fanciful when he finds in that pantheistic poem of Amairgen—assuredly one of the most venerable remains of Celtic antiquity —preserved in the Book of Leinster, the germ of the

philosophy of Scotus Erigena. In the same way some have seen the germ of the dark self-questionings of Hamlet in the speech of an Anglo-Saxon chief quoted by Bede. When Paulinus brought Christianity to Northumberland and King Edwin consulted his wise men, one of them said: "O king, the life of man while on earth, compared to that which is unknown to us, seems to me as when a sparrow flies swiftly through the hall where thou art sitting with thy thanes in the winter time, with the warm fire lighted on the hearth, but the icy rain-storm without. The sparrow entering at one door flies quickly out at the other; while it is within it is untouched by the storm, but after a little space of calm it flies away, and passing out of the storm into the storm again, is lost to thy sight. So the life of man is seen for a little while, but what follows it, or what went before, we know not. Therefore, if this new teaching shall bring us anything more certain, it seems to deserve to be followed." Nothing could better make us feel, by force of contrast, one distinguishing peculiarity of the Celtic mind, the absence from it of the questioning spirit. When Scotus Erigena himself became a reasoning philosopher he passed out of the ken of the Celtic world. To this day it remains the characteristic of those writers whom we call distinctively Celtic, that they live by their imagination rather than by their intellect. And who shall say where vision ends and where credulity begins? Perhaps the Celt is right in regarding doubt as an intellectual limit beyond which he dares not, or does not care to, tread. It must be said, however, that the habit of subordinating intellect to imagination has brought the Celt

neither blessedness nor greatness. His visionary disposition is partial to that conservatism which has so greatly helped his enemies. So long as the other world lies within call and prospect, there will never be any active instinct to redress the wrongs of this. Had the Celt ever permitted himself to doubt, had he called in the aid of reason, his history would have been different. It is when the wild suspicion crosses the brain of the citizen that after all the religions have been deceiving him with their promises, and are in a conspiracy with the whole mundane order to repress him, that the mob turns to a tiger, and the peasant looks across the field to the chateau, asking himself why horses should fare better than he. Happily in Ireland—where signs of change are not wanting—there is as little prospect of revolutionary horrors as anywhere, though what have hitherto been accounted the permanent characteristics of the Celt may become hard to recognise in new transformations.

1903.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CELTIC MOVEMENT*

OW many men carry into middle age, or even very far into early manhood, a concern for literature? It is unfortunately true that, while almost every man continues throughout life to require at odd moments, or perhaps at regular intervals, "something to read," an interest in literature, properly so-called, is confined among those who have never wholly abandoned the dream of doing something in it themselves. An avowal, not necessarily quite sincere or without sarcastic reference, of being "commonplace," is very often the curt apology which a man makes nowadays for not being what is called "literary." "I am a plain man," he says—which is only a somewhat deceitful way of claiming that he has the mass of mankind with him, and that literature if it is good for anything should not cease to interest the mass of mankind. And in this he is, no doubt, right: only the fault is not so entirely as he conceives the incompetence of the poets. It is for history and progress, doubtless, to bring about moments in which the generality of men shall hearken to the dreams of poets, and in which the poets shall hear through the din of actual life the music of humanity. Between

* *Ideas of Good and Evil.* By W. B. Yeats. London: A. H. Bullen, 1903.

such moments there is perhaps nothing for it but that the poet shall dream his dream and the ordinary man thresh out the concrete problems of civic life, with all the ingenuity, integrity, and good sense he can apply to them.

Mr. W. B. Yeats, whose career is cast in a period in which there is no such *rapprochement* of poetry and life, but rather—in spite of the protest of Mr. Rudyard Kipling—an increasing divergence since the days of Tennyson and Whitman, has just published a book of essays in which, considering the influence of its distinguished author, it is perhaps permissible to look for an authoritative statement of the philosophy of the "Celtic movement." The breach between poetry and modern life he holds to be absolute and permanent. There are some anomalies in the book, such, for example, as appreciative references to Walt Whitman, yet the general argument is clear and consistent. The reign of tradition, which had been disturbed by the Renaissance, was overthrown by the French Revolution, which was the inauguration of the reign of reason. Now the awakening of reason (this is Blake's and Mr. Yeats' dogma) brings with it the obscuring of imagination, and the arts, being the products of imagination wrought upon by the "memory of mankind," cannot live under the reign of reason, but only where the reason sleeps: for all art is an emanation from the "memory of mankind," the "dwelling-house of symbols," which moves men through the imagination. Let the arts, then, proposes Mr. Yeats, take refuge where tradition has never been disturbed, among peasants and primitive people, who live close to the "great memory," amid traditions

which "carry them back thousands of years." Leave to the "middle class" its Longfellow and its Mrs. Hemans, its history, science, politics, philosophy, and lodge among kindly and credulous country folk, who see fairies and have not lost the use of charms and simples, and in whose folklore we see the lineaments of an eternal and ancestral art. Such in its naked presentment is Mr. Yeats' theory, in which one can see certain similarities to that of Wordsworth and of Tolstoi, the distinctive part here being the abandonment of the ordinary man, so to say, to his fate, and the contemptuous repudiation of all humanitarian ideals.

Mr. Yeats has perhaps done as much as anyone at the present time to bring home to us the significance of folklore and primitive literature, before, it may be, they pass away for ever; and in this respect he may claim for his work in literature the commendation of Mencius, who said, "To gain the peasantry is the way to become the son of heaven." The peasant with his folklore represents the unreclaimed part of our nature, which we call the superstitious, and which though unreclaimed is not the less real. People ask us do we believe in ghosts, a question to which only that submerged and subconscious part of us, which stirs in us as it will, can make answer. So it is with the belief in fairies, the shrunken gods of ancient Ireland, which still lingers amongst the Irish peasantry —a vaporous and elusive belief, withdrawing from the interrogation of the most friendly into denial or deprecation of itself. These peasants are partly submerged in a world of which we know little, nay, they know little of it themselves. The ostensible part of

their nature, the man who speaks to you at his door or on the road, does not believe in fairies, but the submerged and subconscious part of him does, so that he is, perhaps, sufficiently sincere in the denial of his faith for the cock to forbear to crow. Still we must not close our eyes to that defect of the savage mind, or the peasant mind when entirely unawakened by thought—the lack of perspective—which makes his folklore worthless to thought either as art or as testimony. The supernatural effects in his tales are a confusion of planes. He views the landscape and the world of his imagination as it were on a flat surface. The stars are hung up in the trees. He cannot distinguish between the world of phenomena and the world of "bodiless essences" to which thought admits us.

A race loses sight of primitive beliefs much as the growing child discards its playthings and its dolls. How exactly he grew out of them or what became of them, the grown person cannot well remember; yet that he did so somehow is no less certain than that he can still recall and to some extent regret the power once his to animate bodies stuffed with bran or tin soldiers. Every tribe and every nation emerging out of dim antiquity has lost or destroyed its dolls, and with them a whole world of beliefs and legends, the recollection of which continues for a long time to afford a livelier impulse to the poet than the business and politics of a mature civilisation. The wars of a nation when it was an obscure tribe were, perhaps, comparatively speaking, toy battles; yet though modern warfare may afford wider scope for real heroism, self-sacrifice and skill, the poetic imagination

cannot invest its naked reality with the old atmosphere of romance. In religious matters also the childhood of nations and individuals believes in powers and presences, in giants, fairies and hob-goblins, and not in a law governing life and conduct; and the poet, who represents in a nation far on into its full maturity, its early beliefs and make-believe reality, shuns in these days the paths of actuality, and seeks the twilight haunts of memory and shadows. And thus poetry, though treated with indulgence and consideration, falls in our own time into some contempt: the poet insisting that these memories and shadows are the only real, or at least the most real things, and the ordinary man, when the poet is out of earshot, allowing his opinion on the matter to explode in noisy and good-humoured merriment. The appearance of a poet wholly on the side of the ordinary man—Mr. Yeats' contemporary, Mr. Kipling—is notable at this juncture. Yet there are realities hidden away in the life of each man; and unless the poet can resolutely fix on these, affirming to those who prefer the excitements of the market-place to the dreams of the study, a reality deeper than either, he must seem to the practical man much as a child floating bulrushes on the duck-pond to the mariner whose "beard in many a tempest hath been shook."

Is it true, as Mr. Yeats says it is, that city life, commerce, and "middle class" vulgarity kill out the visionary faculty, which men once had on the mountain-side and the plain, or in the infant towns? On the contrary, everything seems to show that it is in culminating stages of civilisation that magical and visionary practices, such as those described in this

book, come uppermost. The poet returns to nature, but the natural element of one possessed of abnormal powers seems to be the welter of an abnormal civilisation. Among the stalwart farmers who made Rome or the burgesses of early London, whom William Morris loved to imagine on the wharves of an uncontaminated Thames, we hear little of seances, hypnotism and the like; it is in imperial Rome, in Nineveh and Babylon, in modern London and Paris, in the vast urban populations of India and China, that we hear of such things, and if our towns increase so as to suck up all that remains of peasant life it may be expected that this product of city life may increase proportionately. Indeed, one might say that it is among the *esprits bornés* of the "middle class" that it has its chief vogue. Tertullian acknowledges that the growth of Christianity was greatly furthered by the general interest taken in the spiritualistic phenomena with which it was at first associated. In England, the religion of the masses throughout the large towns is more and more infected with these practices; so wide of the mark is it to condemn city life and the "middle class" on these grounds. But, indeed, in the tone adopted by Mr. Yeats towards the "middle class," which is simply the mass of mankind, we can gain some idea of how dangerous it would be for mankind that any section of it should achieve transcendental power or knowledge, and how wise are those Powers who so obstinately withhold their secrets from men until they have graduated in faith, hope and charity. 1903.

THE BEST IRISH POEM

" *As certain also of your own poets have said.*"

T the beginning of the nineteenth century a name rose into prominence in England which was a baleful star to poetry, a name at which Eros paused in his ranging and grew pale, recognising a threatened end to that great period of his apotheosis during which he had become the inseparable companion of the nine muses and been held equally in honour with them—the name of Malthus. The modern study of literature has taught us to see every literary movement in relation to the philosophical theories and social changes of the time, and we might almost say that the first formulation of the Malthusian theory —or the theory that population tends to increase at a rate in excess of the means of subsistence—was the signal for poetry to betake itself to the interpretation of nature and of the individual life, and no longer to be the mouthpiece of those warlike and reproductive instincts which make for mighty nations. For the poet is of all men most susceptible to any changes in the intellectual climate of his age, and the slightest cloud in the metaphysical or speculative sky often causes a fatal rift in his lute. The poets were at once up in arms against Malthus: Shelley, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, all protested against this cruel demonstration by a Church of England clergyman of the

blindness of Cupid. "I had rather be damned with Plato," said Shelley, "than go to heaven with Malthus!" "This abominable tenet," exclaimed Coleridge, "disgraceful to man as a Christian, a philosopher, a statesman, or a citizen!" But that the arguments of Malthus had struck home, at least so far as the poets were concerned, is clear from their subsequent fortunes. Already had come the epoch-making defection of Wordsworth and the almost complete change in the venue of poetry brought about by his withdrawal from civic life to his native mountains; and in the next generation we find the poets either faithful to the magnificent prospectus of the new poetry which he prefixed to *The Excursion* or else battling pathetically with theological and sociological spectres, and endeavouring to lay the hateful ghost of doubt. It is only historic visionaries like William Morris or belated *jongleurs* like Swinburne, who adhere obstinately to the old themes, as though the sun of a new era were not already well up in the sky. Generally speaking, in spite of the reassurances of such writers as Henry George, the poets have never quite got over the depression caused by the "theory" of Malthus, and it would seem as though the reproduction of one generation by another were a process which must now go forward unattended by the gratulatory chorus of the poets: indeed it is hardly among those naturally selected for the continuation of the species that they find now-a-days either their chief audience or inspiration. One and all, the poets turn with an increasing aversion from the noisy and unlovely centres of population to the calm and solitude of nature; obeying an instinct perhaps not essentially different

from that which drove the Christian ancestors of the modern world into the wilderness.

The " population question " meant a different thing to that poet of County Clare who in 1780 wrote what has been called " the most tasteful composition in modern Irish," *The Midnight Court* (*Cuirt an Mheadhoin Oidhche*). The Munster poets of the eighteenth century, in whose idealism there is none of the pessimistic alienation from the joy of life of the later English poets, produced a literature which has not yet found its critical interpreter; an office which, we may wonder, is not taken over by someone like Mr. Stephen Gwynn or Mr. T. W. Rolleston, whose knowledge of Gaelic enables them to enjoy in the original poetry for which such high claims are made as that of Owen Roe O'Sullivan, Egan O'Rahilly, etc. We need not wonder that the penal times produced poets whose main themes were wine, women and joviality, any more than we need wonder that Calvinistic Scotland produced Burns. Perhaps, indeed, the dear Irishman is never so unconvincing as when he talks, as he is so fond of doing, of the horrible events of the penal times, as if they were entirely undeserved, or as if, from his own point of view, they did not prove a blessing in disguise. But for the penal regulations, Ireland would doubtless have been, at the time of O'Connell, as much an English-speaking country as Scotland. The modern Gaelic movement is in direct descent from the battle of the Boyne, which threw the Celtic world back on itself, and arrested that disintegration of the old language which was already far advanced. The penal regulations were a very mild form of that discipline to which every race which has

ever done anything in the world has been at some time subjected, and the lack of which till then in Ireland is probably the cause of its having missed hitherto both that political and literary destiny for which the Irishman, both physically and mentally, is so well fitted. As it was, that period proved, so far as matters could at so late a date be mended, his salvation. With nothing to do but to keep quiet, Gaelic Ireland at length achieved in its own despite something like unity. The population steadily increased, and whereas at the beginning of the seventeenth century there were only about half a million Gaelic speakers in Ireland, by the end of the eighteenth century a big nation had come into existence, which has been the main problem of the British Empire ever since. As regards literature, this period was, by all accounts, the golden age of Irish poetry. Not only did many of the mediæval tales and poems then receive their final shape, but a sudden expansion of form and metre brought into the poems of the Celts the passion and genius of their melodies. During the "Augustan age" of English literature poems were written in Ireland which have far more in common with later developments of English poetry —with poems, for example, like Shelley's *When the Lamp is Shattered* or George Meredith's *Love in the Valley*—than anything produced by the "wits" of the London coffee-houses. These poets, however, were only strong in the expression of the primordial instincts. When he "begins to think," the Celtic poet is not so much, as Goethe said of Byron, "a child," as a nasty bigot. The stock-in-trade images of unregenerate Irish nationalism are all of his creation : Kathleen Ni Houlihan, the Soggarth Aroon,

the Saxon tyrant, the jolly good fellow. Ironical, sensual, gregarious, and too clever by half, the Irish poet enables one to understand how tough a problem was presented in the Irish temperament to evangelists like Ignatius Loyola and Wesley, who both entertained the vain ambition of repeating in Ireland the legendary success of Patrick.

Yet that there is no natural limitation in the Irish mind which disqualifies it for "dealing boldly with substantial things," or for free speculation, is sufficiently proved in the poem already mentioned, *The Midnight Court* of Brian Merriman, now published and translated in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* by L. C. Stern. The steady increase in the population had already begun to overflow in that stream of emigration to America and to the large towns in Ireland and Great Britain, which, with another cause mentioned in the poem, deprived the country of its best and most enterprising young men. What remedy for this evil? is the question discussed by Merriman. The form is the mediæval *Aisling*, or vision. The poem opens with a fine description of daybreak on a summer morning in the county Clare.

"My heart rejoiced as I looked on Loch Greine,
The fields, the soil, and the width of the skies,
The mountains lying serene and lovely,
One over the other uplifting their tops.
Dried up though it be, the heart rejoices,
Spent and nerveless and filled with pains;
The embittered hungerer, owning nothing,
Looks forth for a little while over the woods!"

Wandering on until exhausted the poet lies down and falls asleep. A woman of giant form appears to him in a dream and upbraids him with his sloth. Does he not see how the people are hurrying to the Court, no court of robbers who have "sworn on the Bible the destruction of the poor," but a court of the queen and high dignitaries of the fairies who befriend Munster, and who are met to hear the complaints of "the poor, the good, and of women." There is a want of men in Erin. The high spirit of the old race has gone over the seas, and the young men are doing nothing to replace it. Without further parley the poet, as helpless as Chaucer in the claws of the eagle in the *House of Fame*, is seized and borne over the valleys to the court at Feakle.

He there finds a company assembled in a stately room lighted with torches (it is midnight in his dream), and standing at a table, with tear-stained face and excited gesture, a maiden is laying before Aoibhell, the Queen, the sad case of the women of Erin, who through neither choice nor fault of their own have to live "like black nuns." It is only the old, not young and proper men, who will marry. She enumerates her own charms, and describes without reserve her frustrated efforts to secure a mate, urging that some compulsion be brought to bear on the young men. In answer to this an old man rises and pours forth vindictive abuse of the women of Erin, which he illustrates by an account of his own mésalliance. The young men of Erin, he contends, only show their prudence in refusing to marry; and he makes a grumbling allusion to the high fee (three guineas and a crown, as the German editor reminds us) which the poor man

had then to pay the Church for the privilege. But if it be true, as he admits, that the "race of men is degenerating on the soil of green and delightful Erin," there is an "easy way of peopling it once again with heroes," without the "useless and meaningless" help of the priest. Abolish marriage. Let noble blood combine with peasant vigour to produce a worthier race. Proclaim through the land freedom to young and old. Such a law will breed again wit and sinew in the Gael, and the men of the land will have "chest, back, and fists like Goll."

The reply of the first speaker to this is serious and crushing:

"God willed that the mother should not be forsaken.
In women's behoof have the prophets ruled!"

She defends the delinquent in the old man's case in language which drops out of the decorous pages of the German review, but is led on by his proposal to contrast such dotards as he with the fine young men who are lost to the country in the Church. "My heart is filled with grief, and in perplexity I wonder at one thing, what has exempted the clergy from the bond of marriage? For languishing maidens it is a sad sight, their muscular build and comeliness, jovial countenance, and sparkling smile. . . . They live in luxury at table, with comfort and money for drink and pleasure; they have beds of down and nourishing meats, with cakes and comfits and wine and jesting; they are trusty and able and young and sociable, and as we all know, made of flesh and blood like ourselves!"

"I say nothing," she goes on, "of the awkward chatterbox, the gouty grumbler, the disconsolate

booby, no, my business is with the simple and stout fellows who snore and do no work. I think certainly that many might still take orders, and I allow them! We must not, in justice, hang the whole company, condemning all to the rope, nor would I sink the ship for the sake of one man. Many of them, indeed, are no good, and many are unregulated and not to be trusted, niggardly, unsympathetic, without virtue, rough and cold, hateful to women! But the most of them are better, filled with love and of a noble nature. By their help we often attain a thing of value, a jewel, a cask, or grain. Their virtues are extolled, I know it, and many a clever and proper deed of theirs. Often, too, in the country have I heard a whisper running round that the gentlemen have their love-affairs."

"A sorrow on the land it is, and a wrong to women, this senseless obligation of the clergy. A bitter grief it is for Ireland, what we have lost by this aimless law. Wise Queen! I lay before you my complaint—the law which binds the priests! My little confidence is shaken, I am as one who sees not—enlighten me, and tell me, for you know it, the speech of the prophet, the royal apostle's living word! Where is the rule ordained by the Creator, of the killing of the flesh in the priestly tonsure? Saint Paul said not, as I think, to shun marriage, but rather lust; to leave your kindred, however high you be, and life-long to cleave to the wife. But it were a vain thing for one such as I to expound to you the sense of the law."

Finally, the queen pronounces judgment. She finds a true bill against the men of Erin, and henceforth whoever of them is twenty-one and unmarried

is to be handed over to be whipped. As regards the remedy proposed by the plaintiff, she says: "Speak it softly and tell it not above a whisper, your hand over your mouth, for talk is risky: just at present you need not disturb those charming gentlemen—it is coming to marriage with them, you will see it yet! The day will arrive of the great dispensation, the Pope himself will put his hand to it. He will find that this community is hurtful to the land, and soon you will have free for the marriage-bond those fine fellows who take your fancy!" The poet now finds himself to his discomfiture the object of general attention. He is hailed forward to the table by his conductor, and convicted of being thirty and unmarried. In a clever and amusing passage he gets in an account of himself, his personal appearance and habits, his popularity with the gentry (Merriman had acted as tutor in several houses), his musical gifts—it is plain that he deserves no mercy. They decide to make a terrible example of him, and sentence him to be flayed alive! The date of this important decision is being called out in the court when the poet—awakes.

It would be unbecoming in us to add anything to the judicious words of Aoibhell in summing up this delicate case. The vexed question of a celibate clergy, is it not discussed exhaustively in the pages of Lea and of Lecky? The poet who delivered himself of this powerful piece of social criticism was himself little of a reformer, and his poem, which continued to be treasured in the memory of Gaelic speakers till well toward the end of the nineteenth century, does not appear to have caused any particular scandal. Would this have been so had he written his poem in English?

If not, the inference is that English was even then the accepted language of the people, for the language in which ideas have play and influence is surely the language of its thought and literature. Or was it that freedom of thought and speculation was natural to the Irish in their Gaelic speech, but that in presence of the hated English they maintained an appearance of rigid and conventional orthodoxy? Merriman lived on till 1805, in which year his death is recorded in a Limerick newspaper: "On Saturday morning, after a few hours' illness, in Old Clare Street, Mr. Brian Merriman, Teacher of Mathematics, etc."

1905.

ST. PATRICK ON THE STAGE

IF St. Patrick were only a saint, there would be little more to say about him. When virtue has reached the degree of saintship, or even of extreme heroism, it passes necessarily beyond the ken of modern imagination, which has not as yet evolved its own ideals of moral perfection; so that it is not by the saints, or by such spotless heroes as Perceval and Bayard, that our minds are dominated nowadays, but by the more or less equivocal characters of such beings as Hamlet, Don Quixote, Faust, or Don Juan. Not only indeed can we no longer portray saints, but when we undertake to portray devils and malefactors, we find ourselves making heroes of them. We all know the effect produced by Milton's rendering of the myth in *Genesis*. Having learned to know Satan, we conceived a certain liking for him; we saw his position, and how inevitable it was that a personality like his, fretting itself out among the supple-kneed seraphim, would come sooner or later into collision with a deity so jealous of individuality as Jehovah. Satan fell, and, at least according to Milton, everything that was the least interesting in heaven fell with him; and the practical moral of Milton's whole experiment is that we moderns are as yet far from being qualified to treat sympathetically of celestial matters, and that until we can state Jehovah's side of the case with a little more sympathetic insight than Milton shows,

and a little more sincerity of aspiration for the colourless round of a heavenly day, we would do well not to enter into rivalry as to these things with the conceptions of past civilizations, which gave themselves up to spiritual contemplation as we to mundane energy and desire. If Patrick, then, were only a saint, we should not think much about him nowadays : long ere this he would have faded into the inane with St. Andrew, St. George, and St. David. Patrick, however, has a literary vitality quite peculiar to himself among patron saints; and his figure, so far from shrinking to insignificance under the application of the higher criticism, stands out all the more impressively and honourably when his story is told as it probably happened—as, for instance, Aubrey De Vere in some of his idylls has told it. His fame as a man still keeps alive the marvellous history which made him the theme of Marie de France in the twelfth century, and of the Trouvères, and in the seventeenth century of Calderon. Calderon's drama is without doubt Patrick's most distinguished appearance in literature. In this play, however, Calderon has placed the saint under a dramatic disadvantage by introducing as his spiritual protégé a reprobate of the finest Castilian quality, Luis Enius, whose psychological experience so fascinated Shelley. No saint, indeed, could compete on the Spanish stage with an impersonation so congenial to it as the " Irish soldier " who, having enjoyed every form of wickedness, insists at the last moment on enjoying heaven as well.

During the highest development of the Spanish drama, it was still possible for a saint to appear without loss of dignity on the stage, as he had done in

the old miracle-plays; for the Spanish drama, like the Greek, but unlike the English, had not cut itself adrift from its religious origins, and so remained a far more truly national institution than the English drama ever became after the Reformation. Indeed, it is hard to say what might have become of the English drama when, owing to the Reformation, it had forfeited a permanent source of romantic interest in the mystical and miraculous, but for the accident, as it were, that the "higher education," lately inaugurated at the universities, had already begun to yield its unfailing crop from year to year of youths whom it has incapacitated for gaining a livelihood in the usual ways, and that among these were certain intellectual adventurers who were driven by want of pence to take the crude popular theatre out of the hands of interlude-makers and doggerel comedians, as in our own times their descendants have taken journalism out of the hands of reporters and publishers' hacks. In the London taverns they hatched the project of a Renaissance drama, and ranged all countries and all histories for subjects. Whatever their drama lacked, there was no lack of variety. Yet the new Renaissance drama never had the support of the people as the drama had in Spain. For one cultivated Englishman who took a patriotic interest in the new blank-verse play, there were probably at least a dozen who did not give two thoughts to the stage, and were far more ready to discuss the latest innovations in doctrine from Geneva and Holland. On the other hand, scholarly courtiers like Raleigh were delighted with the academic element in the new drama, and encouraged its free expression. It was not, however.

these "university wits," but their prodigiously assimilative and business-like young colleague from Warwickshire, who turned the court favour to full account, and created a drama which gained as much as it lost in permanent value by its estrangement from popular interests. Wonder is still expressed that Shakspeare's contemporaries failed to recognize in him what he was; yet surely no further explanation is needed than that among all his creations there is not one which indicates the slightest sympathy in their author with those political and religious aspirations into which more and more with each succeeding year of his life the intellect and energies of his nation were passing. Outside the romantic world which he created for himself, no very serious drama was possible on a stage devoted chiefly, more and more, to the amusement of the anti-Puritan party. As James's reign crept on, and the favour of the people became more and more worth having, and that of the court less, his successors became discouraged; and even before his death we find Beaumont regretting the days when they sallied from the Mermaid Tavern as from a citadel. No dramatists could have taken their art more seriously than Jonson, Massinger, or Shirley, who seem to have written less for an audience than with a view to the ultimate publication of their collected works; but no amount of artistic seriousness could make a drama serious which was estranged from the religious culture of the nation, and ordinary people began to find the churches much more interesting than the theatres.

In 1635, when the theatres were closed for a time owing to the plague, James Shirley came over to

Dublin in order to help his friend Ogilby, Wentworth's Master of the Revels, in starting the new theatre in Werburgh Street, the first theatre founded outside London. Shirley's visit to Dublin has puzzled his biographers, who have tried to explain it by suggesting that the Chief Justice, Sir George Shirley, was his relative. But it is not hard to conceive what must have interested this Catholic poet in the new theatre at such a moment. Dublin was then, indeed, a Protestant town chiefly; but it had that necessity of a theatre in those days, a court anxious to encourage one, while in the background was a population in which, whatever its indifference and ignorance, there was no such sullen antipathy to "stage-plays" as was paralysing the English theatre. Instead of a nation filled with hostility or indifference to the stage, there was here a nation in which the drama might have a distinct part to play, both in conciliating and in educating the people. To Wentworth, bent on making his court as imposing a representative of royalty as possible, the project of establishing a theatre under the patronage of the Castle must have been so acceptable that we may perhaps assume that he authorized Ogilby's invitation to the experienced London manager. Perhaps, however, "Black Tom's" favour may have been in part accountable for the slightness of the interest shown in the enterprise by the Dublin public. For hardly anyone came; and, in the prologues which Shirley wrote for plays by Ben Jonson, Fletcher, and for several which he contributed himself, he seems to take the empty houses as a mournful sort of joke:

" I'll tell you what a poet says; two year
He has lived in Dublin, yet he knows not where
To find the city . . . .
When he did live in England, he heard say
That here were men loved wit and a good play;
That here were gentlemen and lords; a few
Were bold to say there were some ladies too;
This he believed, and though they are not found
Above, who knows what may be underground?"

He remained about two years in Dublin, and before leaving made a special effort to " find out the humour of its taste " with a somewhat remarkable play, *St. Patrick for Ireland,* with which he seems to have succeeded better.

The theme is the conversion of Ireland to Christianity; and the play is interesting, both as proving to the " Irish Irelanders " of our own day how completely even then the Anglo-Irish nationality had identified itself with the country, and also because, in order to interest an Irish audience, the author found it needful to introduce that religious element whose exclusion from the Elizabethan drama was, as already said, its fatal limitation. For a special development of drama in Dublin there had been the necessary historical preparation. Besides the miracle-plays which from an early period had been popular, the trade-guilds had accustomed the public to dramatic entertainments. " An ancient custom," says Walter Harris, " prevailed for a long time in the city of Dublin, always against the great festivals of the year to invite the Lord Deputy, the nobility, and other persons of quality and rank to an entertainment in

which they first diverted them with stage-plays, and then regaled them with a splendid banquet." These stage-plays were chiefly pageants; and in them, as might be expected, we hear nothing of St. Patrick: it was rather his equivocal rival St. George who triumphed, on what was afterwards known as College Green, in the presence of both Irish and English lords. That St. George should not at least occasionally have given place to St. Patrick is the more to be regretted when we think of the real part which he was even then playing in native Irish literature, in those dialogues with Oisín, which might so naturally have been the starting-point of a school of Irish drama. But except at the Castle, and perhaps at King's Inns, Dublin had seen nothing before Shirley's visit of what the mediæval drama had grown into; and it is interesting to find that the first play which seems to have interested an Irish audience had in it something of the character of a miracle-play.

After all this, some account of the play may be expected; but the story hardly bears telling. If Shirley could have maintained the style and spirit of the first act, in which the alarm of the Druids is represented, and the approach of St. Patrick with his guardian angel,

> —— *" a pale man coming from the sea,*
> *Attended by a tribe of reverend men,"*

the play would have had a unique character among the productions of the later Elizabethan drama; and we must believe that this is the kind of play which the author would have liked to write. But his

audience in Werburgh Street was as disinclined to listen to an elevated play on an Irish subject as an "Irish Ireland" audience in Abbey Street now is to listen to a burlesque. The moral depravity of the mere Irish, their absurd notions of poetry, and the infamies of their original religion had to be exhibited for the delectation of the Anglo-Irish; and only at the close of the play, where Patrick drives out the serpents, does it recover the tone with which it opens. Most of it is taken up with the intrigue of the prince Corybreus, who, in order to win Milcho's daughter Emeria, disguises himself as the god whom she specially adores, and is at last stabbed to death by her on his detection. Here, as always, Shirley misses his dramatic opportunity; for if Emeria, otherwise an interesting creation, could have been made to raise her hand against a god, she would have become a symbol—almost Greek—of the revolt of a pure human nature against obscene superstition. To a Catholic poet, however, this would in any case, perhaps, hardly occur; and we must admire the tact with which Shirley, writing for a bigoted Protestant audience, manipulates his main subject of the conversion of Ireland, not, as Calderon does, making it an occasion for the glorification of his Church. To have taken Patrick more seriously than Shirley has done, to have told his early story in detail like Calderon, to have armed him with a wonder-working crucifix, or even to have alluded to his crowning miracle of opening that door into Purgatory and Paradise which had a few years previously been destroyed by order of the English Government, would have been to ruffle the serene conviction of Irish Protestants that Patrick was

a kind of advance-guard of their ascendancy. Still he permits himself some appeals to a more enlightened patriotism which must have existed among his audience, as where the saint foretells the coming glory of Ireland :—

" This nation
Shall in a fair succession thrive, and grow
Up the world's académy, and disperse,
As the rich stream of human and divine
Knowledge, clear streams to water foreign kingdoms;
Which shall be proud to owe what they possess
In learning to this great, all-nursing Ireland."

Finally, with the expulsion of the serpents—a subject dear to the Anglo-Irish—he leaves his audience in great good-humour. *" St. Patrick for Ireland* is a failure; but it is the failure of a man of genius," says Mr. Gosse. A miracle-play written for a Protestant audience in the seventeenth century could not, indeed, be anything but a failure; and its chief interest now perhaps is that it enables us, far better than a good many of the acknowledged " sources " for the period, to realize how the Anglo-Irish felt towards their country on the eve of the Rebellion.

Shirley had meant to write a second play about St. Patrick; but, unless he had some share in another play which had a great success, *Landgartha,* by Henry Burnell, produced on the following St. Patrick's Day, and founded on a serpent-story in Saxo Grammaticus, he does not seem to have done anything towards carrying out his purpose, for by that time he was back again in London. Soon after, the Dublin theatre was closed owing to the Rebellion. It is perhaps allow-

able to speculate on what the Irish campaign of this last of the "Elizabethans" might have led to had he been given a chance of following it up. Apparently, in order to interest Irish people in the drama, he had found it necessary to make some appeal to national feeling. We can hardly suppose that he had any notion of the richness of Celtic legend, or that he had any other feeling than that of the ordinary Englishman's contempt for the "mere Irishman." But it is no stretch of probability to suppose that, having been successful with a Patrick play, he might have gone on to Strongbow, and that a definite school of Irish drama might thus have been started, which, although it might have had to wait till the foundation of the Abbey Theatre, sooner or later would have recurred to that one neglected vein of Irish literature and legend awaiting dramatic development, the dialogues of Oisín and Patrick. To have originated the conception underlying these dialogues is the chief claim, one is tempted to think, of Irish literature to be taken seriously. Nietzsche is anticipated in the scorn of Oisín for the ideals of Christianity. The idea is here supplied, in the light of which not only the gods and heroes of ancient Ireland, but the primitive ideals of all the western nations, could have been brought into dramatic contrast with the ideal of moral renunciation communicated to European civilization from the East. A war of ideals might in time have conferred on a Celtic drama the glory of a work embodying that ideal which is destined to be victorious.

Shirley remains a distinguished figure, although his verses are halting enough, as may have been noticed

in our quotations—each verse, as it were, seeming desirous of shouldering off responsibility for being a blank verse upon its neighbour. Yet he is still of the great company of the Elizabethans, and wisdom and beauty still blossom under his pen. He is more, indeed, of a poet than a dramatist; nor can we think of him in any age or place as the initiator of a movement so bold as the emancipation of the English stage from the limitation imposed on it by the Shakspearians, who made it the satellite of a court, and estranged it from the religious culture of the people. To please his aristocratic audience, Shakspeare had for the most part been content to make game of the people, and bring them on the stage in a pall-mall of clowns and yokels. And all the while these clowns and yokels, small tradespeople and country farmers, were slowly acquiring the conviction that they, and not the court, were the real nation. Shakspeare, apparently, little suspected that one of his tinkers, Christopher Sly or Snout, had it in him to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*. A new generation was soon to arise whose ignorance of Shakspeare is the mark no less of the limitations of Puritanism than of his own art. Every speculation as to the private life of Shakspeare seems fanciful; yet the suggestion of Professor Barrett Wendell that, in the three last silent years of his life, he had "felt a check," has a strong fascination. In 1642, when the Long Parliament closed the theatres, Shirley was maintaining quite creditably the tradition of a drama which had no relation to the serious life of the people. "Whereas the distressed state of Ireland, steeped in her own blood, and the distracted state of England,

threatened with a cloud of blood by a civil war, call for all possible means to appease and avert the wrath of God"—so began the proclamation. James Shirley went back to his former life as a schoolmaster; and, to judge by his preface to the first folio of Beaumont and Fletcher, and by his famous lines, "The glories of our blood and state," said to have been written on the occasion of Charles's death, he remained firm in his literary admirations and in his loyalty. At the Restoration his plays were revived without success; and he found himself regarded as an old fogey by Dryden and his circle. In 1666, an old man of seventy, he died, together with his wife, from exposure in the streets during the Fire of London.

1907.

THOMAS MOORE AS THEOLOGIAN

E lose our taste for theology almost as easily as our feeling for poetry, and from much the same causes. Our poetry fails to interest us after youth, not merely because it suffers from rivalry with the practical affairs of life: for the most part it is not as yet, properly speaking, a literature for men; it expresses emotional states merely, clings to the illusions of youth and does not attend man to the market-place, or even to meditative solitude, as his counsellor and consoler. In youth, when life is still before us, and presumably all the delightful and passionate experiences of which our modern poetry is the expression, this expression has an immense attraction for us, and for a brief period we run through the entire gamut of this proxy experience; presently, however, when we begin to suspect that life is not going to be quite what we fancied—that, in fact, it is likely to go to a rather thin and reedy tune strummed on the one or two inherited aptitudes (or inaptitudes) that we may have—we soon learn to leave poetry to cranks and pedagogues, and to look askance at those dreamers who continue in middle age to murmur to themselves Keats' odes or Shelley's melodious rhapsodies. Whenever literature has been really great, its aim has been the comparatively simple one of combining amusement with edification, and it is owing to their excessive dread of trenching on what

has been regarded, since the days of the Apostles, as the peculiar province of the clergyman, that our poets have so little to offer us once we are grown at all scarred and disillusioned. If there has ever been a great poet who was not also a good deal a theologian, we should like to hear his name. It is certainly only such poets who add something to that still scanty "literature abounding in subjects of meditation" to which Schlegel looked forward, and which, as some have fancied, will one day give Western culture its "sacred book." But no, the day of sacred books is over! It is the end of poetry now, and of the arts generally, not to write the Upanishads or to build the Parthenons of the future, but to awaken in man new faculties of thought and vision. It is for our poets to restore those private interests without which life is scarcely decent; and only when they have taken over that whole region hitherto abandoned to clergymen will our poetry begin to speak with the Oriental largeness and authority.

These remarks may seem out of key with the associations raised by the name of Thomas Moore, but they are suggested by the interest in theological matters which distinguished him in common with poets much greater than himself. This taste of his is the more noteworthy when we consider him as the principal founder of Anglo-Irish literature, a literature in which a genial vein of theological originality has been perhaps the chief deficiency. When we speak of Moore as a theologian, however, we must make a distinction. The need of a metaphysical background for his world, a sense of the mystery of things, was no part of his poetic constitution. His well-known

lines, "This world is but a fleeting show," hardly seem charged with any characteristic emotion; and when, in the presence of Mont Blanc, he was moved to record his conviction that "there is a God," he forgot, as Hazlitt said, that "the poet himself, standing at the foot of it, however diminutive in appearance, was a much greater proof of his own argument than a huge, shapeless lump of ice." Of Moore's complete indifference to theology, in the more general sense of the word, we may judge by the fact that in his *Lalla Rookh* we have the product of a study of much the same authorities as Goethe used for his *Westöstlicher Divan*. When we call him a theologian, then, we use the word in the sense which it usually bears among his fellow-countrymen, and as signifying one who is versed in the "Protestant and Roman Catholic controversy." Theology, in this restricted sense, was Moore's life-long hobby; and in his *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in search of a Religion* he made a contribution to it of some importance. Certain discoveries which he had made in the course of a long experience in the drawing-rooms of the English aristocracy had thrown something of a new light on the faith of his childhood.

"Tom dearly loves a lord," said his friend Byron; and he himself always declared that the best society was only to be found among titled people. On certain occasions, when he found himself in the company of the great and aggrieved poets of his time, whom he overshadowed in the popular esteem, it was noticed that he "seemed sensible of his inferiority," but with lords and ladies he mingled freely on his own terms. Indeed he was, in a sense, a lord himself; for this little

man was understood to be the owner of a large poetic estate, to wit, Ireland, a country which has never, perhaps, been without a kind of romantic attraction for the imagination of Englishmen. This poetic lordship of Ireland was held by Moore without question for nearly fifty years, and now that he is in his grave for more than that time it is doubtful whether any successor to him has appeared with title deeds equal to his, either in the opinion of the British public or of the Irish people. Across the Shannon and north of the Boyne, there is now a new, vaguely interpreted Ireland, with lakes of uncertain locality like Innisfree; but within the ancient borders of the Pale and as far south as Killarney the human associations, without which a limited company would hardly risk planting an hotel even in the most beautiful region, have been provided mainly by Thomas Moore. No doubt the Irish Muse had ranged Erin for some high-souled yet careless-minded young peasant, such as her Caledonian sister had found a few years earlier following the plough; but apparently her search had been in vain when she hastened after the Aungier Street grocer's son, and touched his trembling ears as he sate before the pianoforte in England. In Moore's case this is no mere pedantic Miltonic metaphor; it was through his ears that he received that national afflatus which his contemporaries promptly recognised as his distinguishing merit. He had listened so lovingly to the old folk tunes of his country that presently, when they came dancing through his brain, words leaped up in answering rhythms, not noble or magical words, for the most part the decorous diction of the eighteenth century, which even when unaccustomed to metrical

motion moves in his songs not without an old-world conventional grace. As Mr. Stephen Gwynn says, "Moore was really importing into English poetry some of the characteristics of a literature which he did not know." He was the principal medium through which the melodious soul of Ireland passed over into the English language. As he came to recognise his own position as the national poet of Ireland, he began to take a new interest in his intellectual estate. He remembered his early days in Trinity College, and the absurd feeling of intellectual intimidation once imposed on him by the Protestant Ascendancy. Irish Protestants had been slow to acknowledge him as the national poet, and it was only when they heard of him as moving in the highest social circles, and as the chosen intimate of the colossal Byron, and saw him when he came over here making familiarly for the Viceregal Lodge, that they ceased to annoy him by calling him "Tom" and not "Mr." Moore. And now—especially in the light of the new ideas coming into vogue among Moore's aristocratic friends—what a small affair seemed Irish evangelical Protestantism! What a mean little relic of provincialism the Protestant Ascendancy! What was Protestantism anyway? The question was already beginning to agitate the cultured seclusion of Oxford.

We can understand, then, and partly sympathise with Moore in the feelings which prompted him to publish, in 1833, his *Travels of an Irish Gentleman,* a work in which his contemporaries found it hard to recognise the hand of the "Irish Anacreon." He knew how distasteful to Irish Protestantism was that development of the Romantic Movement in theology

which was to culminate by turning the most picturesque figure in the religious life of England during the nineteenth century into a cardinal. In an English drawing-room he could pour forth his devotion to the Catholic Church unabashed, as in his beautiful song, "Through grief and through danger thy smile has cheer'd my way"; whereas in Dublin his audience would have been nearly as much affronted by it as the ladies in *Tannhäuser* were by the praise of Venusberg. To represent the altered situation of the once haughty church of Primate Boulter, now with a rather ghastly semblance of disinterestedness setting up soup-kitchens and Bible-depôts among the suddenly enfranchised helots on whom it still depended for tithes, he devised the symbolism of an elderly maiden lady who has set her heart on becoming the mistress of Ballymudragget Rectory, with its income of £2,000 per annum, and to that end on the conversion of the author, a lively young Catholic student of Trinity College—such a youth as Moore remembered himself as being when he was at college with Robert Emmet. The author tells how nearly he was seduced by the prospect offered to him; and indeed a man with the domestic instincts of Moore might well be so, for however extravagant was his notion of their income, the Protestant rectories are still perhaps the most pleasing-looking domestic objects that one sees in the remoter parts of Ireland—peaceful homesteads coeval with their embowering trees, contrasting with the more recent edifices of the priests, which, with their densely-planted shrubberies and thickly-gravelled walks, are after all transparently bachelors' establishments, destitute of that instinct for nestling into nature in nature's way which

distinguishes the Protestant rectory. A sensitive scruple, however, withholds the hero; as the rector of Ballymudragget he would no longer have the proud feeling of belonging to a church to which it was against his worldly interest to belong. Properly speaking, indeed can a church truly be called a church when it has lost this feeling? "The church" should surely be in some kind of opposition to "the world"; and Moore, accustomed to belong to a true and persecuted church, felt quite genuinely that he would hardly recognise himself as belonging to a church at all when it brought so large a share of that peace which the world can give. The English Government, at last thoroughly understanding the situation, had been setting itself to make the antithesis of "church" and "world" null and void in Ireland, and to enable the Catholic clergy to live in all the comfort of Ballymudragget Rectory; and at the time Moore wrote his book had just sent over one of its strongest churchmen, Whately, who, with the ingenuous view of weakening the authority of the Catholic Church, recommended its establishment. A little earlier "Catholic Emancipation" had been granted, and it is the news of the passing of this Act which moves the hero, as he sits in his rooms in Trinity College, to utter his famous exclamation, "Thank God, I can now become a Protestant!"

The author sets out on his theological "travels" confident that in the teaching of the primitive Christian Church he will find Protestantism in all its purity, but to his not very well-feigned surprise finds that this teaching, so far from resembling the religion of the Rector of Ballymudragget, is point for point identical

with that of the poor despised Irish priest.—Many have been led, like the present writer, to look into Moore's book by its attractive title and by the name of its author, and been disappointed to find that it is only a somewhat lively contribution to a now happily almost extinct controversy. What the disputants in this controversy seem never to have perceived was that Protestantism and Catholicism are necessary to one another; that the one without the other is as inconceivable as Liberalism or Conservatism without its rival. Moore's rather unpleasant book was excessively resented by Irish Churchmen, who, like Whately, believed that time and education were all that was required to turn Ireland into a Protestant country; and within a few months of its appearance it had been answered by more than one book as big as his. Moore wisely said nothing more; he was satisfied to have got in his word. They might prove his ignorant, and even occasionally dishonest, use of quotations from the Fathers; they might assert with some truth that his book proved nothing but the incapacity of such a mind as his to recognize the object of his search when found: he had shown, at all events, that an "Irish Gentleman" (a term emphasized on his title-page), who had taken as much pains as can reasonably be expected from a layman to inform himself as to the points of controversy, had yet no mind to turn Protestant. When a man of letters, like Moore or Kingsley, intervenes in a controversy beyond his powers he is generally guided by a ray of real perception. Irish education has advanced considerably since Whately's day, but Ireland shows no sign of becoming Protestant; and the Catholic Church is no

longer afraid of it. Certainly neither Protestantism nor Catholicism is going to keep the modern spirit out of Ireland; but when it succeeds in expressing itself, as it is now striving to do, it will probably take its character from the Catholic mind rather than from the Protestant; for a real difference is perceptible in the cast of mind of those who look back on the beliefs of bygone generations from one or the other standpoint. Ignatius Loyola and Calvin are not more radically distinct from one another than are Voltaire and Rousseau, Renan and Emerson, Comte and Herbert Spencer, Anatole France and Bernard Shaw.

Moore pleased very few people with his book. Catholics were offended by its Anacreontic renderings from the Fathers, and religious Protestants derived from it the perhaps correct opinion that the author was essentially an "infidel." A tendency to make light of man's distinguishing faculty of reason is no doubt a horrible and even diabolical one, and it was this tendency in Moore's book which chiefly shocked a genuine religious genius, the Irish-Spaniard Blanco White, then residing in the household of Archbishop Whately. White belonged to a Catholic family which had been driven abroad by the penal laws; and the history of his religious development, from strict Catholicism to a kind of Christian rationalism, is almost an epitome of the historical development of Christianity. The book with which, in a few weeks, he answered Moore, *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman,* contains a more agreeable story than Moore's, and presents an array of arguments with a force only possible to one whose whole heart lay in these matters. The further progress of his theological

opinions presently became a subject of concern to the archiepiscopal household, and he withdrew to Liverpool, where he died after a few miserable years—a religious outcast. His *Rationalist à Kempis* has recently been reprinted; but he is now remembered chiefly as the author of a sonnet pronounced by Coleridge the most grandly conceived in the English language, which, as a genuine example of that still scanty theological poetry to which we have alluded, we shall conclude by quoting :—

"*Mysterious Night! When our first parent knew*
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet, 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And lo! Creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst flow'r and leaf and insect lay revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?"

1911.

IRISH BOOKS

HERE is something so incurably wrong with the world that it is hardly possible to rectify one wrong in it without introducing another. The moment we begin to attend to the affairs of others, with the notion that our own are fully looked after, that moment we begin to act on an assumption of omniscience which will be punished, either in our own experience or in that of others. Thus England, in suppressing the native wars in India, the burning of widows, etc., has raised even greater embarrassments for itself in over-population and famine; and somewhat similarly our modern libraries, in their determination that posterity shall miss no line of what we have been pleased to write during the past hundred years or so, have already almost hopelessly depreciated the value of the written word and rendered it, one would think, a nearly impossible task for posterity to fix on those books which deserve immortality. We may even doubt whether in the world of books some struggle for existence is not the best security for the survival of the fittest, and whether books of the giant order are likely to appear under conditions so entirely favourable to book-production as the present. It is characteristic of nearly all such books that they have been produced by a kind of accident, the authors being anxious perhaps to beguile the hours of exile or imprisonment, or like Milton to prove a thesis, or like Shakspeare to

make a fortune—to avenge themselves, to confess themselves, and so forth. Authors who have been most resolute to produce literary masterpieces have, as a rule, produced the least satisfactory ones. Humanity is endlessly curious about itself, and is not to be put off in its quest of some authentic revelation of itself by the most imposing array of vocables, as the Landors and Swinburnes appear at times to have supposed. The real book is an embodiment of some profound human experience; and thus the scholar, who passes his time in conning the records of other ages—for happily it is the real books which hitherto have tended to survive—is not so unsocial as he may seem to be, for he is really conversing with the souls of peoples, or with mankind itself, in a more direct and satisfactory manner than is possible in the most unconventional assemblies, where it is hard for the most part to see mankind for the men.

Something of the old-fashioned coyness in putting one's name on a title-page lingered on even in Scott, but in general it may be said that, with the great psychological change which came over the world at the end of the eighteenth century, literature assumed a new and corporate dignity in the various nations, and it was generally felt that every country with separate frontiers, just as it ought to have a senate-house and an army, ought also to have its array of poets. Indeed, could the retreat of the Muses have been discovered, there has hardly been a European statesman since that period who would not have regarded it as his most adroit public action to place one of his country's mountains at their disposal. Accordingly in Ireland, during the early decades of

the nineteenth century, we had quite a number of writers—many of them encouraged in their laudable ambition by government pensions—who set themselves, in the phrase of the time, to be the "Irish Walter Scott," the "Irish Burns," the "Irish Béranger," and so forth. So far as Scott was concerned they were well entitled to adopt his method, for it had been from an Irish writer, Miss Edgeworth, that the Wizard of the North, at least he said so himself, had filched his fire. Neither Gerald Griffin, however, nor the Banims, dexterous and inventive though they were, ever quite succeeded in reproducing his magical blend of romance and reality, nor in diverting the attention of the vast reading public of the new era from Scotland to Ireland. It may be doubted whether Scott was an entirely fortunate influence at this period; whether, but for his dazzling vogue, some Irish writer might not have stumbled on the secret of Turgenev, and so made the literary fortune of his country. The incomparable Scottish advocate, who delighted to show visitors round his Highlands, and whose tales and poems form a sort of guide-book for that public and that posterity which he could not conduct personally, was a little too much of the showman to make an entirely profitable model for these ambitious and self-respecting writers. As usual, when a man of distinctive genius did arrive he was a little disconcerting; he appeared (of all places!) in a quarter, at the mere mention of which any Irishman with the least pretension to true culture and liberality will shrug his shoulders—in the pages of a proselytizing magazine! Carleton was the man sent by God in response to the general clamour for an Irish

Walter Scott. As Shakespeare came out of the heart of England, so Carleton came from Tyrone, the locality in which the three elements of modern Irish nationality were most naturally blended; and as he declares himself in his proud and bitter *Autobiography*, "there never was any man of letters who had an opportunity of knowing and describing the manners of the Irish people so thoroughly as I." His Catholic countrymen, however, have never been the chief admirers of this apostate; indeed, it was not till Davis had got hold of him—when unfortunately it was too late—that he set himself to write with deliberately patriotic intentions. A man, like Burns, of immense natural ability, who felt himself the equal of anyone, he wrote of the life which he knew, and Catholic Ireland had in the author of the *Traits and Stories* a literary interpreter such as it has never had before or since. Ireland's anger burned in him duly, but, unfortunately, in him it was directed impartially against foreign oppression and the religious perversity of his countrymen, which, in their united effects, had so heavily handicapped him in the struggle for life. Unlucky Carleton! Catholic Ireland would have applauded for ever the man who would have done for her history and for her heroes what Scott had done for those of his country; and it is conceivable that Carleton, who plumed himself a good deal on his rather remarkable physical resemblance to Sir Walter, might, with a little more adroitness than he displayed through life, have rejoiced with dogs and horses in an Irish Abbotsford. But his early experiences had hardly prepared him for representing Ireland's history and antiquities (about which he cared nothing) under

that veil of romantic illusion through which they are still viewed by many of her sons; and nations have no Abbotsfords for writers who do not flatter their vanity. Late in life he declared his intention to write his autobiography, into which, wrote he, "I will pour all the pent-up venom which has been so long corroding my heart at the ingratitude and neglect which I have experienced from my country." He only began to write it, however, a few months before his death, when suffering under one of the most formidable of mortal diseases, and it was with no intention of emulating Rousseau, but of providing his daughters with a little money, that he produced what is, perhaps, the most interesting of all Irish books. But for the enterprise of Mr. D. J. O'Donoghue, who published it in 1896 as the first volume of his *Life of Carleton*, it might never have appeared at all. In the part which he completed he tells the story of his life up to that point at which his experiences as an author began, and there is none of the venom in this part which he proposed to pour into it; on the contrary, there is beauty, and the glamour with which an old man's memory invests his youth. The temperament revealed in these pages is certainly a hard one. It is the temperament of the Irish peasant, the so-called Celtic temperament, which is really no doubt the temperament of the peasant everywhere, and which is only transformed and softened, perhaps, by some kind of religious movement. In no other book does the Irish peasant attain self-expression as he does in this, and nowhere is there an equally sympathetic presentation of that great peasant world of which O'Connell was the champion, on the eve of its "Anglicization."

WAYNESBURG COLLEGE

The mutual jealousy and suspicion of the Protestant and Catholic branches of the Christian Church in Ireland were now threatening to spoil not only Ireland's dreams of obtaining political independence, but even her innocent and laudable desire to have a literature; and just as the "Wild Geese" of the seventeenth century had taken service in Continental armies, so now the young men of talent of provincialized Ireland, the "Wild Geese" of Protestant Ascendancy, took service more and more in the ranks of London journalism or in far-off British Colonies. And meanwhile the new population brought into political existence by O'Connell, and rapidly throwing over its ancient language, was beginning to call for something to read. It was at this time that Thomas Davis came forward, a name which in some respects is above every other Irish name. Davis appears to have impressed everyone who worked with him as the greatest man of his generation in Ireland: what Lessing was to Germany (to compare small things with great) he gave promise, during his wonderful three years of activity, of being to this country. Consciously a pioneer, in him as in no other lay the possibility of reconciling the discordant elements of Irish nationality, for his sense of the boundless opportunity offered to a new European community in a spacious island of its own was not stronger than his feeling for his country's heroic past. In particular he found a use for the ancient Gaelic language as a sort of palladium of nationality; and though we may admit now that he lost his head a little on this subject there was some excuse for him at a time when some millions of Irishmen were still talking a language unknown to

the others. He himself had too many irons in the fire to do much more than dash off hurried prose articles and verses as they were wanted, but he was the cause of writing in other men, and in the *Nation*—the one literary enterprise which has excited general enthusiasm in Ireland—his was the prevailing "spirit." In one respect alone was Davis scarcely satisfactory. Whoever woos Ireland must be provided with some answer to that artless question which she may suddenly spring on him, as Margareta did on Faust: "Do you believe in God?" It is the distinction of Davis that there was something about him which raised the question of his religious credentials, nor was he the man to shirk the question had it been fairly asked him or to put it lightly by. But what could the leader of Young Ireland do when his already favoured rival, the mighty champion of Old Ireland, breathed into her ear his private knowledge that the young men of the *Nation* were little better than "infidels"? Mr. Rolleston, who has written well of Davis, attributes his failure, or as he prefers to say, the "interruption of his influence," to the Famine; but is it not plain that Davis, with his noble passion for national culture and independent thought, belonged to a tradition which Ireland, with its many rankling memories, with its indifference to the national ideals of the end of the eighteenth century, and later with its impossible claims for the Gaelic language, was preparing to repudiate? His proposal to unite Ireland by means of a national culture which should ignore the "religious question" was a little like proposing to act *Hamlet* without the Prince. In the actual drama of Irish history at that time the

" religious question " had its full part assigned to it. " There's no offence, my lord," we may figure Young Ireland as, somewhat feebly, assuring the moody master of the situation, and the latter as replying, " Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, and much offence too!" No sooner had the protagonist in the Irish drama begun to take action than Young Ireland with all its ideals collapsed; and as regards literature very little came of that union of the finest spirits which Ireland has seen—nothing that can be called a book. There is perhaps one exception which rather strikingly illustrates our thesis of the incidental nature of literary masterpieces, John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*.

What ought now to have happened was an Irish Aufklärung—an Irish Emerson, and, if not a Transcendental movement, a movement at any rate which should transcend the paltry quarrel of Protestant and Catholic, which so far has prevented Ireland from realising either its political or literary ideals. What a difference it would have made had some clergyman or parish priest transformed an Irish country town or village—Westport or Doneraile—into an Irish Concord! A thinker who would have unsealed the fountains of thought and claimed the full privileges of a human being on the soil of Ireland would have brought it far further toward the realisation of its spiritual and political unity than ever did Parnell. But Ireland's hour was not yet come, and just as, after Davis, politics became once more estranged from those interests which ensure the support of the wise, so literature estranged itself from those common interests which make it genuinely national. There was, first, the well-meaning Ferguson, sometimes

really exalted in his personal poems and adaptations from the Irish (particularly the noble *Conary*), but whose more ambitious labours smell a little too much of the Record Office. There was also the attenuated Wordsworthianism of Aubrey De Vere. Lastly there has been the considerable literary movement initiated chiefly by Mr. Standish O'Grady, styled variously the "Irish Literary Revival," the "Celtic Renascence," &c., in which the chief factor has undoubtedly been the peculiar genius of Mr. W. B. Yeats. The meeting in modern Ireland of the modern with the ancient spirit is an important event, not only in the literary but in the spiritual history of Ireland, and perhaps the full significance of the work of Mr. Yeats and Æ will only be apparent eventually. Mr. Yeats in particular understands the ancient Celtic spirit as Ronsard understood Græco-Roman antiquity, and is imbued with it in much the same way; and just as it was only when the modern world had learned to understand the ancient classics that it began to strike out in every direction on lines of its own, so perhaps the spirit of Ireland, through its self-recovery in this last poet of the line of Senchan Torpeist, is being made ready for new beginnings.

Meanwhile if we ask whether the voluminous literary activity of the last twenty years has brought forth a Book, we shall have difficulty on fixing on any one work which Ireland seems likely to take to its affections permanently. If a masterpiece should still come of this literary movement we need not be surprised if it appears by a kind of accident and in some unexpected quarter, and we have a fancy that appearances in modern Ireland point to a writer of

the type of Cervantes rather than to an idealising poet or romance writer. A hero as loveable as the great Knight of the Rueful Countenance might be conceived, who in some back street of Dublin had addled his brains with brooding over Ireland's wrongs, and that extensive but not always quite sincere literature which expresses the resentment of her sons towards the stranger. His library would be described, the books which had "addled the poor gentleman's brain": Mitchel's *History of Ireland* would be there, and Cobbett's *History of the Reformation,* and Mrs. J. R. Green's *Making of Ireland and Its Undoing.* We can conceive him issuing forth, fresh-hearted as a child at the age of fifty, with glib and saffron-coloured kilt, to realise and incidentally to expose the ideals of present-day Ireland. What scenes might not be devised at village inns arising out of his refusal to parley with landlords in any but his own few words of Gaelic speech; what blanketings, in which our sympathies would be wholly with the rebel against the despotism of fact! His Dulcinea would be—— who but Kathleen ni Houlihan herself, who really is no more like what she is taken for than the maiden of Toboso, but who, in the addled masculine brain of the Irish idealist, is a sort of wraith materialising itself on the eve of chimerical insurrections—an old woman (God save the mark!), not a friendly and buxom wench, whose partiality for strapping young foreigners, whether Danish, Saxon or Scotch, has had a great deal to do in bringing about the present, by no means desperate, situation of modern Ireland. And such a book as we fancy need not really insult or injure the cause of Irish nationality any more than

Cervantes laughed real chivalry away. Ireland remains, a country inhabited by a new, freshly-compounded, English-speaking race of men, equal to any race in physique, intelligence and opportunity; a country in which anything may happen once her sons agree to cast out delusions and to realise their common humanity together. A mixture of races, wrote Davis, is "as much needed as the mixture of Protestants and Catholics." And he added, "If a union of all Irish-born men ever be accomplished, Ireland will have the greatest and most varied material for an illustrious nationality, and for a tolerant and flexible character in literature, manners, religion and life, of any nation on earth."

1911.

This was of course a sorry account of the "Irish Literary Renascence"; the collected poems of Mr. Yeats, Æ, and others, Synge's plays, etc., will doubtless be called "books" by generations of Irish readers. Mr. James Stephens' lively and delectable vein had in 1911 only begun to flow, and Mr. James Joyce had not yet published his highly instructive studies in the life of those young men who have chiefly to be reckoned with nowadays in arranging or forecasting the future of Ireland. The anticipation in the final paragraph might seem to have had a partial fulfilment in Mr. George Moore's *Hail and Farewell.*

1917.

A WAY OF UNDERSTANDING NIETZSCHE

" The tension of the soul in misfortune, which communicates to it its energy, its shuddering in view of rack and ruin, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting and exploiting misfortune, and whatever depth, mystery, disguise, spirit, artifice or greatness has been bestowed upon the soul—has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? In man CREATURE *and* CREATOR *are united; in man there is not only matter, shred, excess, clay, mire, folly, chaos; but there is also the creator, the sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divinity of the spectator, and the seventh day!"*—BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL.

LTHOUGH Nietzsche may fairly be described as a dangerous author, there is the same kind of natural safeguard against the corruption of his readers as that which preserves the schoolboy from corruption by the more highly-coloured passages in the works of Horace and Ovid which are placed freely in his hands, and may excite the misgivings of parents. The wit required to understand what Nietzsche really means is as little compatible with intellectual gullibility as an aptitude for Latin usually is with the depraved tendencies of the naughty boy. The schoolmaster, at all events, is unlikely to complain if he find in these tendencies unexpected allies; and in like manner divine philosophy may gain unexpected

adherents if the average, or more than averagely, sensual man be led on by the popularity of Nietzsche's lively phrases about Christianity and morals to make acquaintance with a very rigorous intellectual regimen, and to realize the consequences of the proved falsity of many notions of conventional morality and established religion. Indeed he should be warned that if these have chastized him with whips, Nietzsche will chastize him with scorpions. When he has parted with every article of transcendental belief, and sacrificed all those *arrière-pensées* of faith and morals which are so little in evidence in ordinary conversation, and yet are such determining motives of ordinary conduct, he will find himself in the presence of a caustic and relentless mentor who will require of him —at the point where he is ready perhaps to creep into some monastery—a capacity for "gaiety" in self-abnegation and self-annihilation. He will find, indeed, that several of the gravest responsibilities of that God whom he has repudiated have devolved upon himself, and will be called upon, in a world bankrupt in ideals, to create new moral values and new Gods.

We must reassure ourselves a little in face of Nietzsche's disquieting denials of "God, freedom, immortality," and all those inspiring ideas, our secret misgivings about which are revealed whenever a single thinker is bold enough to deny them, and seems to precipitate all the stars of thought from the sky. The denial of "God" and of the ideal is from time to time necessary, because to attain to any real perception in such matters it is necessary to live creatively and to find out these things for oneself.

God as an objective fact does not appear to exist. Such is the reciprocal connection between the individual and the causal energy of the universe that we must create the objects of our belief: the whole force of our nature must go into the achievement. The ordinary citizen does not like the doctrine of God to be challenged: he likes to think of God being there, as he likes to think of a limitless supply of coal in the bowels of Great Britain. It is on the sense of moral cowardice in regard to those beliefs to which we may have recourse in grief or in weakness, but which for the most part hardly bear examination, that Nietzsche relies when he comes with his dogmatic denial of those beliefs. A dogmatist, however, is what no man has a right to be: and Nietzsche, who is as fierce a dogmatist as Tertullian, has of all persons least right to complain if we remind ourselves of the physiological conditions of his shrill assurance. Most men require the stimulus of happiness for production of any kind, but Nietzsche, like Leopardi, was one of those who only rise to the height of their powers under the stimulus of pain and privation. He is one of those invalids who cannot breathe in the lower valleys of thought, and can only get the full of their lungs when hurricanes are blowing. The more outrageous the statement to be made the better he is pleased, and the more himself he is. The bleaker and colder the intellectual landscape the more impetuous becomes his verve. We may be sure that if he rejects with so much scorn "God, freedom, and immortality," it is because it has cost him something to do so.

His starting point is the philosophy of Schopenhauer, a volume of which fell in his way while he was

a professor at Basle, and at once completely filled his mind. Of philology, his study till then, he had said in his inaugural lecture that it is "neither a Muse nor a Grace, but a messenger of the Gods; and as the Muses formerly descended among the afflicted and suffering Boeotians, this messenger comes to-day into a world filled with gloomy and baneful shapes, filled with profound and incurable sufferings, and consoles us by evoking the beautiful and luminous forms of a marvellous, an azure, a distant, a fortunate country!" Pessimism is the most restful of all creeds to a mind harassed by the disorder and vulgarity of modern life, and it is out of pessimism that all the religions have originated. For pessimism is the affirmation of the ideal, and restores to the mind what actuality refuses. To condemn existence as a whole is to exempt from all risk of change and contamination by experience those forms of truth and beauty which the mind creates or of which it can entertain the supposition. Pessimism, as a creed, is the last subterfuge by which the human mind, instead of succumbing to the ills of life by suicide, madness or recklessness, escapes from the galling pressure of fatality. It is true that the pessimist must then affirm, like Schopenhauer, that all the consolations of life are purely negative, and that in turning to art, or religion, or philosophy, or science, he is only exercising the hard-won faculty of escaping, by means of an "objective interest in things," from real experience. But man, as Goethe said, "never knows how anthropomorphic he is." He can never secure his conception of nirvana, of heaven, of God, of beauty, or of holiness from some admixture of the hopes and sympathies which he may

have dreamed of renouncing. The pessimistic idealist is likely enough to return from his contemplations with some "gospel" or philosophy addressed to his fellowmen, in which lurk perhaps all the old seeds of infatuation. In the pessimist's affirmation of the ideal, Nietzsche mockingly detects the last resource of hypocritical weakness. He resolves, then, at the point where all the hopes and illusions of chagrined egoism find themselves foiled, to declare himself optimist—a lover of fate, or a "yea-saying man." He denies "the ideal." More courageous and more honest than Schopenhauer, he returns from the dread region of ultimate self-questioning with no deceptive doctrine of resignation, or altruism, or contemplation—seed-grounds of hypocrisy and illusion—but with the frank and "gay" denial of God, freedom, immortality, and, at the same time, with the equally frank and gay avowal of the will-to-live, the desire of power, strength, and activity. But has he reckoned with the narrow limits of that power in which he has learned to exult, the limitations of experience, from which pessimism has found in art, contemplation, resignation, the only permitted outlets? He returns, at all events, with this augmentation and ratification of the sentiment of power, that it disowns all "idealistic" restrictions. He has acquired a caustic perception of the figmentitious nature of those conceptions which it suits alike the interest of the strong and the poltroonery of the weak to regard as moral distinctions, transcendental or divine, inherent in human nature. Nietzsche stands or falls with his assertion that moral distinctions are not superhuman or superimposed (transcendental) checks and ingre-

dients of human conduct, but the creation, subject to continual transformation from the same source, of humanity itself. The spectacle of "the moral law" awakens in him, not as it did in Kant, such a feeling as the spectacle of the stars awakens, of eternal and supernormal elements present in every-day experience, yet a certain judicious respect as the monument of earlier ages in which man acted in his true rôle as a "creator of values." In the sense that "language is fossil poetry": or in the sense that philology, according to the passage already quoted, evokes the forms of a more fortunate past; so the morality which men accept as "slaves" points back to the creative power of "masters" who imposed it (as Nietzsche conceives, for their own ends).

In the family, for instance, parents will impose a slave-morality: "You mustn't do that!" Impatience, expediency, not to speak of a lack of metaphysical acumen, will dictate this hasty method of tabooing certain actions as in themselves "bad." And it is so that conventional morality and religion treat the parents themselves. Indeed it is only by a flash of intuition, with some elements of "wickedness," that in later life we occasionally transcend the moral casuistry of the Sunday School. Take, for example, public charity. The poor would fare far better at our hands were it not for that moral philosophy which at once puts up our backs by inculcating the practice as a duty. We refuse charity in the streets because we do not like the smack of self-satisfaction consequent on the performance of an action which is reputed to be virtuous. But if it were simply understood that we can do what we like with our own money we

should relieve many a poor applicant simply out of a sense of freedom, or according to that maxim of "noble" as contrasted with "slave" morality, which Nietzsche might have said had lost its way among the early Christians, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Or take the habit of telling lies. It is a matter of expediency to whip little boys out of such a habit, and to impute it as an offence in the mentally undeveloped; yet who can doubt that a punctiliousness about telling the truth is mainly an affair of personal pride, and strongest where it is purely voluntary. But the "noble," who are voluntarily truthful among themselves, will *enforce* the practice on their vassals. The "power," then, which Nietzsche cares about is the power to preside at the origin of those conceptions which direct and control men. We have to bear this in mind in order to account for an apparent inconsistency in the writings of Nietzsche, who, while praising power wherever he sees it exercised in history purely from the love of it, is clearly always on the side of those who confront the might of the world with the might of the idea, and for whom some limitation of circumstance or character has been a "school of genius." When he praises deliberately "bad" men, such as the mythical Machiavelli or Cæsar Borgia, he is praising men who dealt with the crowd in the spirit of "masters," though only after its own moral values; he is praising them at the expense of merely "good" men, with whom some sense of "acquiring merit" by their actions is inseparable from the habit of regarding actions as in themselves good or evil.

But what becomes of those "laws which in the

highest empyrean had their birth," of which Sophocles sang even in that Greek world which philology evoked for Nietzsche? How was it, indeed, that the Greeks and Romans, whose "immoralism" Nietzsche is never tired of praising, were far less afraid than we are of the suspicion of having the tongue in the cheek when they talked of virtue and morality, and used these words far more freely than we do? They believed in good and evil just as much as we do, but in calling a man good or bad they regarded the whole ensemble of his character and circumstances more liberally, if not quite as fastidiously as we. Plutarch's heroes do not in general perform particularly "good" actions, yet his biographies leave the impression of goodness or badness, or rather of moral strength or weakness. In regard to morals, Nietzsche is (by continual effort) one of the ancients: and though his attitude towards the struggle of the ordinary man with his "temptations" can hardly be described as sympathetic; though in fact he holds his sides in unholy merriment at the spectacle of men living deliberately against their inclinations; he is probably as whole-hearted as any moralist in his belief that the devil is an ass. "I do not deny," he says,—"as need hardly be said if it be allowed that I am in my senses—that it is needful to avoid and combat many actions which are called immoral; just as it is needful to perform and to encourage many which are called moral; but I think it is needful to do both the one and the other for different reasons from those till now acknowledged. It is needful that we should change our *way of seeing* in order to arrive, perhaps very late, at changing our *way of feeling*." Nietzsche himself

seems to see with the ancients and to feel with the modern puritans like Emerson, Thoreau, Carlyle, who have arrived at a "way of feeling" in these matters most nearly akin to that of the ancients ("teachers best," as Milton calls them, "of moral prudence"), and who have regarded man, as the ancients regarded him, rather as having a will to exert than as having a soul to save. In this way the ancients maintained their supremacy as moralists even after the appearance of Christianity, with its consoling but, as it seemed to the ancients, "immoral" beliefs. Nietzsche, as is well known, denounced Christianity as a perversion by which, owing to a combination of circumstances, "slave morality" was enabled to triumph over the "morality of masters." This antipathy to Christianity into which he has thought himself helps one, at all events, to understand the attitude of serious thinkers in the ancient world who detected in the "forgiveness of sins" and the annihilation of the will, a lax morality. And later, when Europe was filled with renunciants and ascetics, paganism was still able to unfold before the eyes of men the most shining examples, not indeed of holiness, but of manhood (virtue). Throughout the middle ages and under the regime of ecclesiasticism, virtue, in the old sense of manhood, was almost discredited in favour of the ideal of renunciation; until the Renaissance, with the not specially antique accompaniment of libertinism, brought back the ancient ideal of a humanity "for perfect action formed under laws divine." The morality of Shakspeare's plays, or of Browning's poem "The Statute and the Bust," of Goethe, or of Carlyle's "Friedrich," is none the less positive and

real for not lending itself to inculcation from the pulpit.

To the doctrine of the Superman—that "far-off divine event" to which, according to Nietzsche, humanity moves—a consideration of the "morality of slaves and masters" naturally leads on; but his conception of the Superman, moulded chiefly by hatred of Christianity and the obsession of his mind by Darwinism, is undoubtedly a little crazy. There is a kind of assumption that those great men who act as "bridges" to the Superman exist at the expense of the rest of mankind. But the existence of great men, like the discovery of nature's secrets, brings nothing but gain to all men. A great man, a spiritually great man, is he who adds a new power and significance to life. It is otherwise, to some extent, with the Cæsars and Napoleons, those idols of the average man, who, like the wrath of Achilles, "bring a thousand woes to men, and send quickly to Hades many strong souls of heroes, thus accomplishing the will of Zeus"; and Nietzsche, with his insane denial of idealism and devotion to "physiology," came to acknowledge greatness only in such men. Undoubtedly all civilizations culminate in a period during which a privileged few appear to subsist at the expense of the rest of mankind. Refinement, wealth, beauty, learning, leisure, amusement, all these things are necessary for art; but we must not therefore conclude that civilization exists for the sake of the few. As the blossom is only an incident in the development of the plant, so the efflorescence of art and culture is only a part of the life-history of a race. Behind this efflorescence, and eventually displacing it, new ideas and tendencies are germinating. How is it that the

spiritual development of humanity appears to obey laws so contrary to those which govern its physical evolution, that it is as a rule among the "despised and rejected" that the princes and potentates of thought arise? Clearly because it is on the unsuccessful candidates for natural selection that the problem of existence bears with its whole weight. So little competent is a merely physical theory like that of Darwin to explain life, that its chief service is so to marshal facts as immediately to demonstrate the existence of forces which it leaves out of account, and to send us back perhaps to some metaphysical theory like that of Hegel, which teaches that every positive generates the negation of itself.

1904.

SINCERITY

EWARE of that man," said Diderot of Rousseau; "he believes every word he says!" We are reminded by such a saying that sincerity, or the habit of throwing the vital powers into our words and actions, so far from being merely the attribute of good and undesigning men, is an engine of influence and innovation within the compass of the few. There are indeed certain men—Rousseau was one of them, and there is no doubt a Rousseau in every man of genius—who are born into the world to apply to our arts and institutions the test of genuine feeling. "I am not like any man whom I have ever seen," said Rousseau; "I venture to think I am not like any man that ever existed." But he was mistaken. In all the foibles described by him so lovingly in his "Confessions," thousands of readers in every generation since have confessed themselves vicariously. What was so exceptional in Rousseau was the complete absence in him of that power to adapt himself to his environment, a power which almost everyone possesses, and which parents are perhaps right in choosing to encourage in their children rather than genius; and on the other hand the strength in him of that power whose rarity nature seems to atone for by the enormous attraction and compulsive force with which she occasionally endows it. From time to time a moment befalls when the martyrs of sincerity are

transformed into the founders of new eras, and the "creators," to adopt Nietzsche's language, of the "new values." But for Rousseau, if we may accept the testimony of Napoleon, there would have been no French Revolution; and two centuries earlier, a man who had at first seemed likely to end as one more obscure victim of a sincerity as helpless as that of Rousseau, Martin Luther, apparently by a mere accident, suddenly found on his side the suffrages of men, and himself the honoured father of the coming world.

It is a common fallacy, bequeathed to us perhaps from pre-Lutheran times, that people are by preference and intention insincere, and that the strong man will wear a mask, whereas the truth probably is that insincerity is almost invariably a sign of weakness. If it were in our power to be sincere we should no more think of being insincere than a pleader would bewilder his audience with subtleties when facts were at his disposal. The power of genius is essentially the same as the disconcerting quality of sincerity when brought face to face with false pretensions. The rest of us are constantly peeling off new wrappages which conceal us from ourselves, and finding that yesterday we acted a part; but the genius is he who has arrived at the basis of his nature and whose morrow belies not his yesterday. Genius is that fire which kindles only the altars of sincerity. To be sincere is what every man, from the poet to the Archbishop of Canterbury, finds his account in being. In literature it is style, the power of leaning one's whole weight on the pen. If ever we poor pagans, adrift in what Myers called the "interspace between faiths decayed and faiths re-risen," shall devise for ourselves some consoling ritual, it

ought to be one which should recall us, were it only one day in the week, to spiritual nakedness and self-realization. Meanwhile, to have confided oneself even to paper brings relief and peace, as only those actions do which have the sanction of heart, soul and intellect. If we could believe that a certain number of those actions in trade, politics and social life, which make up the world's doings for a day, were done with the whole-heartedness with which, in a lonely country road, one makes an entry in one's note-book, we might believe in the "progress of civilisation," and that the world was going excellently well; but it is only those who have no plans and no schemes, and perhaps even not too much brains, who can afford to act and speak only from conviction. Verily we need a brood of fakirs and eremites, with souls uncompromisingly exclusive of the otiose and insincere; poets whose poverty in mere opinion perhaps excludes them from society, but whose rare thoughts have the beauty and finality of wayside flowers.

Most people have at one time or another had the dream of how good a thing it would be to say and do nothing except with sincerity; to say "Thank you" and "Good morning" only when you mean it, to laugh only when amused, to listen only when interested, etc. So resolute an attempt, however, to simplify life, very soon breaks down. To begin with, we ourselves have a dozen different sincerities, a sincerity of ill-humour, of jollity, of cynicism, of misunderstanding, to mention some of the less worthy kind; and are we to inflict our moods on our neighbours? Besides, it is only with the sincere that sincerity is possible; and as the greater number of those

with whom the day's doings bring us into contact have not attained sincerity, we must trim our course as we may among conflicting moods. If it is rare that we are sincere even with ourselves, it is rarer still for two persons to be simultaneously and mutually sincere. Sincerity is attained for the most part in solitude, but even there it is to be feared the necessity of inconstancy and variety pursues us. If we felt the force of those intuitions which visit us so absolutely as to feel them always, we should hardly get through life. We cannot afford to be too sincere. Who has not felt, for example, at certain times that existence itself is something to feel ashamed of, and perhaps even said heartily with Sophocles, "Not to have been born is past utterance the best." Yet to feel this to the exclusion of the ideals of stoicism, of epicureanism, of scepticism, of religion, which in their different ways enable us to live, was impossible not only for Sophocles, who was most likely, like Shakespeare and Goethe, a man of a cheerful and hopeful disposition, but for human nature. The excuse, if one is needed, for this inconstancy to our deepest intuitions is that we are something in ourselves, independently of all the truths we visit as a bee the flower. In reply to that naive inquiry, "What do you believe?" one can only say. This and that! I can no more tell what I believe than I can tell what the universe believes. The chief event of each day should be a fresh discovery of what one believes, and every mood has its own creed. People sometimes talk as though a creed, capable of weekly recitation, were an essential part of the equipment of life, but really it is surprising how well one can get along without a creed. As the Indian scripture

says, "Drinking of the pleasant beverage called the perception of truth, one becomes free from excitement and sin."

It is contended that science and religion are not necessarily opposed, yet it is hardly to be denied that *Scio* has ascended the throne of *Credo*, who sits as a kind of dowager-empress, wearing the insignia of former greatness, and even insisting on precedence, yet yielding all her real authority to her successor. What we "believe" has not the value of what we know; what we have heard from another we say we believe, but what we have found out for ourselves we know. For a long time humanity, having quite insufficient notions of the phenomena of external and of human nature, of the stars and the earth and the cause of thunder, formed the habit of distinguishing between the truth of faith and the truth of knowledge. It must, however, be admitted that the notion of faith as a special organ of the human mind is not one which bears examination now. The disappearance of faith simply means that the mind is now called upon to verify things for itself, and to bring them within the range of knowledge. In regard to a difficult and involved subject, for example, like the origins of Christianity, in which certainty is so difficult to arrive at, but in which the well-disposed are not to be satisfied with the mere criticism of commonsense or with denial, a kind of tacit or provisional assent is adopted by minds unable or too indolent to enter on a general examination of the evidence bequeathed to us: but it is quite certain that those who do not attempt such research are at the mercy of those who arrive at their own conclusions in doing so. As we

study an age like the fourth century, and gradually gain clear ideas of its various tendencies, conviction inevitably rises in the mind as to the nature of historic Christianity and the claims made for it. Such a study may lead to very different conclusions in different minds—that is a question of temperament or the will to believe—but certainty, whether in affirmation or denial, is only to be gained by resolute inquiry.

The New Testament is generally allowed to exhibit a great advance on the Old in respect of the suppression of that hatred of one's enemies so candidly avowed by David in his Psalms. But to love one's enemies is a different thing from making friends with everybody, a thing impossible. There are persons unfortunately to whom our *true* relationship is one of enmity. We can persuade ourselves that we love our enemy, or rather, out of consideration for ourselves, we refrain from breaking through that thin medium of general good will in which we confound our enemy with our friends, until destiny, in some malign hour, throws us into some situation in which we rub shoulders with him all day long, and we discover that the laws of incompatibility of temperament are not to be eluded by any counsel of perfection. To love each man is doubtless the goal to aim at, but until love, hatred! To pray for the discomfiture of our enemies indicates a frame of mind far more likely to succeed in bringing about an ultimate rapprochement than to acquiesce in the continuance of a mutual toleration in which our attitude towards mankind at large, generally egoistic, is not particularised into a personal relationship. Perhaps when our enemy is discomfited

and punished as we believe he deserves, we shall find him tractable and accessible, a man whom one can love. What each man really is, is disguised from us in most cases by circumstances which preclude a genuine contact with him at any point, and to upset these false relations and substitute true ones, the lever of hatred may be meanwhile necessary. On the whole, next to love, this hatred is the highest compliment which we can pay to our neighbour, and the most promising of a happy eventuation. A lover will not hear of any sentiment between love and hatred from his mistress, and we see that mortal enemies, when brought face to face in a duel, are willing to die to give each other "satisfaction." In the pure ether of the inmost consciousness, the region in which the Gospels call upon us to live, where identity is perceived, we may love our neighbour truly as ourselves; to meet him at all in that region is to love him as ourselves. But to love the man whose true personality we cannot reach because of the circumstances which make him our obstacle, it is needful to break down those barriers first.

A certain confusion of thought seems to vitiate those schemes for the abolition of war, etc., which seem to suggest that nations should be governed in their conduct towards one another by principles derived from what the Quakers called the "inner light." Nations, however, have a sincerity of their own in their dealings with one another which statesmen understand. They live, as the jurists of the seventeenth century taught, in a "state of nature" rather than as individuals composing a society, and

we delegate to governments the duty of maintaining our safety and securing our interests after a code which we might otherwise have to practise individually, but which we have discarded as members of society. Neither Laotze nor Socrates nor Jesus interfered with this code, or denied the necessary authority of the State, which on condition of our readiness to sacrifice our lives for it when it is assailed, takes upon its own shoulders the disgraceful struggle for existence. They limited themselves to the demonstration that the true interests of men in every State are identical. The use of terms and of ideals, which have reference originally to the relation of man to his neighbour, have an air of unreality and cant when applied, as they are nowadays by some of our publicists, to the relation of these Titanic beings towards one another, whose normal relations of formal courtesy and watchful neutrality represent a great refinement in the conditions of the struggle for existence, insomuch that we scarcely realise at times that the struggle still goes on, or why the nations should not live together according to the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount. Yet to talk of love between nations is merely a capitulation to the newspapers. So long as their part is simply to look after our interests there may be honourable and prudent dealings in their mutual rivalries, but not love, which begins with renunciation; and were the nations empowered to practise this they might vanish, their task accomplished. A sincere and regretful admission that civilisation is but a refinement of the struggle for life, and that the cause of social well-

being is distinct from the fact of personal salvation, and even perhaps the private and inevitable foe of the latter, might if it were general be the most effective deterrent from war, inasmuch as mankind would then be less likely to be led by specious phrases into unforseen calamities.

1904

REAFFORESTATION.

"Here are trees—let us think the matter out."—BUDDHA.

OF the vegetable world, as man of the animal world, the tree is the perfect type and development: and hence it is that when man is thoroughly at peace with himself, prosperous and flourishing, there is nothing that we compare him with so instinctively as a tree. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." "Man is indeed described by a tree in the Word," says Swedenborg, "and his wisdom from love by a garden; nothing else is signified by the Garden of Eden." In the tree the passive ideal of existence is realised, the vegetative ideal; and though the limitations of that ideal were destined to be demonstrated when the notion of an axe flew to the brain of the latest uncouth-looking mammal, there were entire ages during which the true type of attainment was still the tree, and not in any of the apparently aimless activities of those animals who crashed or climbed or slunk through the forest, or lodged in its branches. Providence, however, had some other end in view, as it appeared, with this planet than the realisation upon its surface of the vegetative ideal: an end which has been perhaps

too boldly defined by the Swedish seer as the "production of a heaven from the human race." However that may be, it is in man—"earth's thoughtful lord," as Wordsworth sings him; "for perfect action formed under laws divine," as Whitman proclaims him—that the purpose of creation, so far as we have knowledge, appears to be concentrated. He has even begun to dream of himself as the medium through which the creative purpose of the universe shall manifest itself further; and only a little while ago a professor of philology in Germany threw up his chair and retired into the Alps in order to proclaim to the world his doctrine of the Superman, according to which man himself assumes within certain limits the rôle of creator. Nietzsche, however, was a mere poet, and more anthropomorphic than any of the Hebrews whom he vituperated. As if, after barely a million years of existence, and a few hundreds of more or less uninterrupted and conscious social development, it were yet time to begin to think of the next stage of evolution! The Superman was perhaps really nothing more (or less) than a personification of the State, an entity which has been created not so much by us as in spite of ourselves by our necessities, and has only in our own time begun to acquire self-consciousness and self-direction. It is true that Nietzsche vituperated the State as the "coldest of cold monsters"; but it is only in the State that the "great man mankind" attains to some of those superhuman attributes with which Nietzsche endowed his Superman, and the Statesman who best interprets the collective will of mankind is perhaps the nearest thing to him that it is permissible to hope for.

The State is, in fact, a cosmic agent, in so far as it is its part to restore the balance of nature where that has been upset by the reckless behaviour of man in the past: to determine, for example, what portions of the earth's surface it can now afford to set apart for the ancient races of the trees. Yet in looking to the State, as to a new Providence, for the solution of all our problems, we are perhaps only giving time for causal energies to mature which lie altogether outside the range of state-interference. What is known as the problem of rural life, for instance—at which the State has recently begun to tinker—awaits for its solution nothing more or less than a new way of looking at things, a new idea, which may arise Heaven knows how, and may change the face of society at any time. For a long time to come we may expect that society will fall into two main parties or divisions, both looking to the State for their sanction, one acting in its name to secure revolutionary adaptations of society to the pressure of its difficulties, the other regarding its own cause as nothing less than that of the maintenance of civilisation, and succeeding periodically in arresting the precipitation towards anarchy. And nature—human nature—will find in neither of these parties, nor in both together, the plasticity and spontaneity required for the moulding of the future of man; it will rather find these in a third class which will meanwhile have arisen, consisting in the first case of those who have fallen away from social effort and public ambition, the "intellectuals" as we call them at present, the "incompetents," and the increasing number of those who are appealed to by the ideal of self-culture,

contemplation, and even asceticism. It is amongst these that a new idea might conceivably arise which might even lead ultimately to a new form of civilisation. It is hard to say, for example, what influence the appearance of an English-speaking Tolstoi might not have in peopling the derelict country with small holdings, inhabited no longer by peasantry—a class which the whole modern system of things is tending to abolish—but by those to whom the prizes of civil life no longer presents an overpowering attraction, and to whom, on the other hand, nature calls. It is an *idea* for which we wait. Without an idea man is frivolous, anarchic, dissatisfied, despicable. With an idea, the long-hoarded initiatives of his nature are liberated, he strains forward to new consummations, he " did not know that he contained so much virtue."

" They reckon ill who leave Me out," says Brahma in Emerson's poem : and the saying may be applied to the " anticipations " of sociologists like Mr. H. G. Wells, which leave out of account the possible effects on the whole structure of society of the renewal in mankind of a disposition for spiritual adventure : a change which would make any prizes which society has to offer to the better sort of individuals as nothing compared with such rewards as Buddha offered in Emancipation, or Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven. He must be very dogmatic or unimaginative who would affirm that man will never weary of the whole system of things which reigns at present : of respectability and security, of eight hours of work and cards in the evening, of shops, professions, motors and newspapers, of household-life and the sacrifice of his natural love of liberty to the requirements of town-

loving woman, of churches and theatres. We never know how near we are to the end of any phase of our experience, and often when its seeming stability begins to pall upon us, it is a sign that things are about to take a new turn. Man, after all, is still man, the same being who flung himself into the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who departed on the Crusades, who peopled the deserts of Egypt and the East, the forests of Germany and the isles, with hermits; and there is no reason, should the idea of doing so enter into his head, that he should not try some new experiment. There is nothing of which we should be less disposed to say that it cannot happen, than that such an idea should not at some unexpected moment occur to him. Mankind, in fact, is always acting impulsively on an idea of some sort. About a century ago, for instance, it took to scooping out the coal-measures, the formation of which occupied nature for millions of years, and already it has almost come within sight of their exhaustion—and all for what? Chiefly because the idea of Speed had taken possession of it, the apparently unassailable ideal of expediting work and locomotion indefinitely. A man does not particularly enjoy ripping through mountains in an express-train or tearing along tarred roads in a motor, but it is an idea, and one of which he may weary any day. The imbroglio of labour and capital, and the first symptoms of a disconcerting but not really irrational "revolt of woman," are perhaps, at the moment of writing, the outstanding results of his devotion to this idea. Probably when he changes it for some other, the trees, which during his obsession by this idea have been

threatened with extermination, may steal down upon the plains again, to his advantage in every way. What if the ideal of Leisure were to succeed that of Speed? If we rightly apprehend Hegel's theory of an inherent logic in historic development, we might almost use his authority in predicting that it will. Of course we must expect that the generality of men will overdo this ideal, just as they have overdone it in India and the East, and just as they have overdone Speed in Europe and America: but its adoption might be attended with one advantage, which can scarcely be said to have attended devotion to Speed: the highest type of human being might be brought out once again as in certain epochs of the past, the sage, the man like unto a tree planted by the rivers of water.

The outlook therefore, we consider, is not without hope; nor are we discouraged in contemplating the growing numbers of young men who have been sent to the universities in order to become lawyers, doctors, clergymen, engineers, etc., and have lost their vocation by the way, inbibing perhaps, to the despair of their parents and guardians, irrelevant notions of self-culture from Goethe, the itch of authorship from Emerson and Carlyle, vagabond propensities from Whitman or Stevenson, insubordination from Nietzsche or Shaw, Christianity from Tolstoi, indeterminate literary æstheticism from W. B. Yeats, etc., all according to their various temperaments. It cannot be said that our universities are directly responsible for this result, whether good or bad, of their training: on the contrary, mundane success of one kind or another is their ideal, and when by some chance one of these young ne'er-do-wells, matriculating in the

vast university of life, attains eventually to honours, the old time-serving alma mater will consider it her special privilege to bind his laurels about his brows. The most flagrant instance of this is perhaps the case of poor Goldsmith, whose monument now "welcomes the coming, speeds the parting guest," Trinity College claiming to have "produced" him. But in what sense did Trinity College produce Goldsmith? Did she discover beneath his pock-marked exterior the graceful and enfranchised spirit whose mission it was to instruct the great British public in the art of expression for more than a generation? Did he feel in his wanderings through this world of care that her eye was upon him, or did her Macte Virtute sound gratefully in his ears when he gained his first successes? No, the ideal of Trinity College is, of necessity, the successful professional man, not the poet, not the thinker; and it would be a mistake to infer from the situation of Foley's fine monument that a beautiful maternal relationship exists between these old seats of learning and mundanity, and their prodigal sons. A little rage at the recollection of Smiglesius and Burgersdicius (fifty years before Goldsmith, Jonathan Swift had been "esteemed a blockhead" for his inability to read these authors, "they were so stupid"), and some memories of cruelty and snobbery which rankled in him throughout his life, were all that Goldsmith carried away with him when he passed through the gateway of Trinity for the last time. Yet we are far from suggesting that it is not the main function of a university to turn out as many good citizens as it can, or that she should maintain any other than a resolutely and even sternly

mundane attitude toward her young idealists: Newman, who came over here in the middle of last century (thinking, like others of his countrymen, that Ireland was a country where ideas grew wild!) had regretfully to acknowledge that this was so, and to abandon his project of starting a university with God for its central idea. And still less should we fail to acknowledge that universities may now and then retain among their teachers one as different as possible from Theaker Wilder.

Have we wandered from the subject of Reafforestation? Not perhaps so very far. We are in quest of the tree-like man, whom our civilisation has hitherto failed to produce, nor does it appear that the seed of him is sown in those "sacred nurseries of blooming youth," our universities. According to the old Indian custom, the time of thought, reflection, discipline, cultivation of the higher powers, education, in fact, in the true sense of the term, came at the end of life, when a man had fulfilled his part as a householder, and presumably had lost a too distracting appetite for the pleasures of life. With us, on the contrary, the time of education is placed at the outset of life, at that period in which a man is probably least amenable to real instruction, the period at which almost any man looking back upon himself will acknowledge himself to have been a young puppy. At the time when the Indian was about to enter upon the more serious and interesting part of his life, and beheld—as a man travelling to the sea may behold from afar the distant port from which he is to embark —the forest hermitage in which he was to make ready for a new incarnation, our citizen, bothered probably

by a clamorous brood of sons and daughters, is beginning to wonder whether it is worth his while to give them an education which meant so little to himself : looking cheerlessly round on the waste places of his spirit, of no economic account in the present system of things. It is these waste spaces of the human mind that its reafforesters, our poets and thinkers, must learn how to utilize.

1912.

A CAUSE

HEN, during the Renascence and the Reformation, it began to be more and more impossible, or at all events more and more unnecessary, for a man in whom stirred the progressive spirit of the race to remain within the Church, the scholar, the political theorist, the philosopher, the poet, and even the saint, coming forth into the world, soon set up standards of excellence and perfection superior to those currently acknowledged within the fold. Protestantism was essentially an abolition of the antithesis between the Church and the World, and whatever we hear nowadays of the failure of Protestantism and of the evils which it has brought in its train, it is quite certain that it has effectually and irremediably done its work, and that the world since Luther's time has become a very different place. The Catholic Church, which until the Reformation had enshrined and appropriated the ideals of humanity, had now to look on, while in each of the nationalities of modern Europe a growing band of idealists began that criticism of institutions and that promulgation of new ideals, which have set up as their goal the realization of the City of God, not in an invisible communion of saints but in the body politic of each nation. The aspirations of the individual soul, which had formerly burned themselves away in prayer and contemplation, now gave birth to lyrical prophecies

of the perfectibility of human society, and the conception of heaven itself began to pale before the conception of an ideal republic. What would Thomas à Kempis have thought of the world revealed to us in George Fox's Journals, the England of Milton and Harrington and Gerard Winstanley? What would he have thought of the adoption by the world of some of the very watchwords of the Kingdom of Heaven? of the attempt to remove from the world those evils which were blessings in so far as they drove the bleeding human spirit to the bosom of God? How, looking further into the future, would he have heard the assertion of Mazzini that true religion comes *from* the world, in its new transformation "the people"; or the still more valiant assertion of Mr. Bernard Shaw that men can only be made virtuous by Acts of Parliament? But even if we pay Protestantism the compliment of saying, as we do, that it represented the progressive force of humanity, we should be claiming too much for it if we said that it carried its forces in good order into the modern world. The word Reformation, which we apply loosely to the exodus from the old chruch of many of her more honest and earnest spirits, is really more appropriate to what we call the Catholic Reaction which resulted from it, and a somewhat similar reaction began among the idealists themselves at the time of the French Revolution when a certain proportion of them recoiled from the reckless propaganda of Rousseau. The celebrated Anglo-Irishman, Edmund Burke, was the leader in this reaction : for whom it may be claimed that he destroyed the general taste for ideal republics by substituting an almost mystical conception of

society and of the state, from which even the most factious revolutionary could hardly with decency withhold his homage. The state, he proclaimed, "is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place," *etc.* Many of the poets in these countries, who had shown symptoms of defection from the parent state, went over wholeheartedly to this champion of natural law in society, just as on the continent a good many of them returned to the fold of the Catholic Church. Wordsworth in particular, who had begun his career as a revolutionary, became one of Burke's most illustrious and not least influential disciples, not so much by advocating his political doctrines directly as by hi sacred zeal in adopting a strictly Burkian conception of his vocation as a poet. Returning out of the uproar of the French Revolution to his native hills, he had found as he revisited his childish haunts, on the one hand, that the "rights of man" no longer kindled in his breast the old exultations and indignations, and, on the other, that he had entered without knowing it a new and hardly discovered poetic region,

watered with the springs of intuition, and where the universal soul stretched away like a vast inland sea.

Yes, the Catholic Church was right, not indeed in thinking that the world must inevitably return to her, or that it would be good for the world that it should do so, but that the idealists who went forth from her would suffer an inevitable disillusionment and deterioration in substituting for the ideal of a church the ideal of human solidarity and progress. They have indeed accomplished great things: liberated thought in human affairs and set the world moving, it may be toward some far-off divine event; brought the whole thought of the world to bear on the affairs of the world. It is probable that never was a time when the world, taking into account its vast problems of population and supply, and the magnitude of its schemes, was more equitably governed, and that never was so close an inquisition made into whatever savours of oppression and cruelty. Abuses which a few hundred years ago attracted no attention are now blazoned and paraded to catch the universal indignation. People who lived under no particular sense of wrong are now sought out and convinced that they are trampled upon. But have our idealists who have brought all this about not lost hold of some of those fiery convictions which they carried with them out of the mother church when they first began to set up theocracies and republics? Have they maintained in its purity any transcendental principle or belief of which they can say to one another "In hoc signo vinces"? Have they established any ideal superior to that of the common man? Have they produced any writing with anything like the solace and certitude

of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation*? Have they found out anything, or even agreed upon anything? Perhaps one of the most really melancholy of all the modern poets, though he was also one of the most beautiful, was the poet whose ideals were entirely mundane and who believed in the perfectibility of society—William Morris; and who of the moderns, at all events in the Anglo-Saxon world, have achieved in their personalities an independent world of transcendental affirmation, if not Blake and Walt Whitman, of whom one was crazy and the other a poet who could not sing, while both were as little disposed to interfere in the conduct of the world as Socrates or Jesus.

Nevertheless, when all is said, we are citizens, concerned in the reign of justice and the remedy of abuses: answerable even, to the small extent of our personal relations, for establishing on the side of the globe a mankind which will enable it to look the other stars in their faces. Is the cause of the Ideal then social rather than personal, as Mazzini dreamed and as our own intellectuals are coming more and more to believe? Religions hitherto have been in the nature of consolations and compensations for the defects of life, and the most comprehensive in its scope of all religions, Buddhism, begins with the postulate that life is sorrow. It is, in fact, a matter of common experience that, as we are constituted individually, the lower we pitch our hopes the better for our happiness. Life is full of surprises and satisfactions when we postulate it as something from which to escape; indeed, some such principle is the whole rationale of art and religion as hitherto understood. But such an attitude towards social life seems hardly

the value of life is the self-sacrifice of the hero, who actually proves in his life and if needful by his death that human nature is competent to achieve certainty, in the realization of which all the consolations of ordinary experience fall away as of little account. To the fact of the heroic experience all religion, all morality, all poetry attaches itself, and is enabled to look once again on nature as in the morning of the world. Tradition is by its means recovered, and the human story is seen to hang on consistent threads, so fine as to be imperceptible yet so strong as to carry suspended on them the entire mass of historical achievement. Through every heroism the poet in man receives a new access of creative instinct, the believer a new confirmation of vision, all men according to their deeds and dispositions a silent rebuke or encouragement; and the human faculties, which scatter like hounds where the trail is false, are recalled as by the horn of the huntsman. To achieve this certitude in thought and action is the dream to which every youth is born.

The interference of religious idealists in the affairs of the world reached its climax, at all events in England, at the time of the Puritan Revolution, and that revolution, even at the height of its success, proved to be a dreadful exposure of theocracy as a principle of government in a modern State. Cromwell, the Lord's Anointed, having deeply dissatisfied true believers by his adoption of a purely mundane toleration, sat uneasily on his throne, haunted at night by terrors; and his secretary Milton, even in the act of inditing his master's messages, was abandoning his plan of the historic glorification of his country and

beginning to dream of Paradise as something irretrievably lost. As a consequence of this disillusionment, a vaguely defined community of lately militant idealists, the forefathers of our own Intellectuals—Swift at the close of the seventeenth century reckoned them in the *Tale of a Tub* at about 10,000—found themselves with their occupation gone, without a cause or a belief, and falling into all kinds of contentions among themselves: in a position, in fact, not without some analogy to what we might imagine would have been the position of the Chosen People if Moses had failed to get them across the Red Sea and they had all been transported back to Egypt. They would in that case have been put to their old task of manufacturing bricks without straw, and would have suffered hardships severer than any with which the sufferings of Grub Street could be compared; but after a while their talents and their solidarity would have told, and in time they would have risen as they had done before to an influential position in the public affairs of Egypt. And so it was with the idealists of England after their downfall at the Restoration and the discomfiture of their attempt under such men as Cromwell and Milton to build with brick and stone the City of God. Little by little, with new and delightful forms of literary composition, they made themselves acceptable and indispensable, and as time went on they dared once again to criticize institutions in the light of their own ideals. The result was—in France the great Revolution; and in England, where the germs of that Revolution were hatched, their establishment in an authoritative position, mainly through the Press. The tendency of our Intellectuals has of late

been to offer advice to the ordinary citizen in every province of civic activity, and they have ceased altogether to be distinguished by any special fervour of belief in "God, freedom, immortality." One suspects, however, that the ordinary citizen can look after his own affairs surprisingly well. It is not for guidance in mundane matters that the man of affairs looks to the man of thought—to whom in general he is infinitely well disposed—but for something which he feels that he has not got himself and that the thinker ought to be able to give him.

What then is the true and final relation of idealists to the parent community? Much depends on our notion of progress, and whether we regard social stability as the desideratum in a state, or believe in the realization of the ideal in society. In the East, where until it began to be disturbed by the West, spiritual progress only was cared about, the true believer is the recipient of alms, which the ordinary householder acquires merit in bestowing. In our own society his place has been taken by corporate bodies which we call churches, and if our idealists had concentrated their energies on the things of the spirit they might perhaps even now, instead of scribbling out their souls for the newspapers, be occupying many of those delicious country parsonages which evoked one of Wordsworth's beautiful sonnets. As it is, they have done little or nothing to deserve the grateful support of society in consideration of any transcendental doctrines of which they might have been the repositories. The economic relation of the children of light to the world has indeed been conceived quite definitely by the religions: the elect should be the

poor, the objects of true charity and the recipients of alms. Granted that our civilization will abolish pauperism, and that the human race by perfecting mechanism will secure at once plenty and leisure, there will still remain the distinction between the rich and the poor, only the poor will be so voluntarily. A certain number of men will always refuse this world's riches. Accepting, therefore, as natural the general division of men into rich and poor, a perfect state of society would be that in which the rich would give willingly to the poor, and in doing so would be assisting a cause and an ideal in which they themselves believed. In the present spiritual anarchy we know not what rascality we may be supporting when we give alms: we may be giving to publicans (in the modern sense) and sinners; but if we gave to a Buddhist Bhikku or a Franciscan brother, to Walt Whitman or William Blake, we should know where our money went, and that we were laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. The Irish beggar who bursts into a torrent of intercession for us on receipt of our copper has a true notion of economic charity and perhaps even believes in the soundness of our investment, at all events gives us encouraging assurance that our money is not lost. Assuming that a life of poverty is the best, that in nakedness of worldly goods a man is brought nearest to spiritual reality, then if we cannot live the ideal ourselves it is well that we should enable it to be lived.

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